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AT LAST:

A CHRISTMAS IN THE WEST INDIES.

The Botanic Gardens, Port of Spain.

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A CHRISTMAS IN THE WEST INDIES.

BY

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London and New York:

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BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
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Dedication.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR GORDON,

GOVERNOR OF MAURITIUS.

MY DEAR SIR ARTHUR GORDON,

To whom should I dedicate this book, but to you, to whom I owe my visit to the West Indies? I regret that I could not consult you about certain matters in Chapters XIV. and XV.: but you are away again over sea; and I can only send the book after you, such as it is, with the expression of my hearty belief that you will be to the people of Mauritius what you have been to the people of Trinidad.

I could say much more. But it is wisest often to be most silent on the very points on which one longs most to speak.

Ever yours,

C. KINGSLEY.

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AT LAST.

A CHRISTMAS IN THE WEST INDIES.

CHAPTER I.

OUTWARD BOUND.

At last we, too, were crossing the Atlantic. At last the dream of forty years, please God, would be fulfilled, and I should see (and happily, not alone) the West Indies and the Spanish Main. From childhood I had studied their Natural

History, their charts, their Romances, and alas! their Tragedies; and now, at last, I was about to compare books with facts, and judge for myself of the reported wonders of the Earthly Paradise. We could scarce believe the evidence of our own senses when they told us that we were surely on board a West Indian steamer, and could by no possibility get off it again, save into the ocean, or on the further side of the ocean; and it was not till the morning of the second day, the 3d of December, that we began to be thoroughly aware that we were on the old route of Westward-Ho, and far out in the high seas, while the old world lay behind us like a dream.

Like dreams seemed now the last farewells over the taffrel, beneath the chill low December sun; and the shining calm of Southampton water, and the pleasant and well-beloved old shores and woods and houses sliding by; and the fisher-boats at anchor off Calshot, their brown and olive sails reflected in the dun water, with dun clouds overhead tipt with dull red from off the setting sun—a study for Vandevelde or Backhuysen in the tenderest moods. Like a dream seemed the twin lights of Hurst Castle and the Needles, glaring out of the gloom behind us, as if old England were watching us to the last with careful eyes, and bidding us good speed upon our way. Then had come—still like a dream—a day of pouring rain, of lounging on the main-

deck, watching the engines, and watching, too (for it was calm at night), the water from the sponson behind the paddle-boxes; as the live flame-beads leaped and ran amid the swirling snow, while some fifteen feet beyond the untouched oily black of the deep sea spread away into the endless dark.

It took a couple of days to arrange our little cabin Penates; to discover who was on board; and a couple of days, too, to become aware, in spite of sudden starts of anxiety, that there was no post, and could be none; that one could not be wanted, or, if one was wanted, found and caught; and it was not till the fourth morning that the glorious sense of freedom dawned on the mind, as through the cabin port the sunrise shone in, yellow and wild through flying showers, and great north-eastern waves raced past us, their heads torn off in spray, their broad backs laced with ripples, and each, as it passed, gave us a friendly onward lift away into the "roaring forties," as the sailors call the stormy seas between 50 and 40 degrees of latitude.

These "roaring forties" seem all strangely devoid of animal life—at least in a December north-east gale; not a whale did we see—only a pair of porpoises; not a sea-bird, save a lonely little kittiwake or two, who swung round our stern in quest of food: but the seeming want of life was only owing to our want of eyes; each night the wake teemed more

bright with flame-atomies. One kind were little brilliant sparks, hurled helpless to and fro on the surface, probably Noctilucæ; the others (what they may be we could not guess at first) showed patches of soft diffused light, paler than the sparks, yet of the same yellow-white hue, which floated quietly past, seeming a foot or two below the foam. And at the bottom, far beneath, deeper under our feet than the summit of the Peak of Teneriffe was above our heads, for we were now in more than two thousand fathoms water—what exquisite forms might there not be? myriads on myriads, generations on generations, people the eternal darkness, seen only by Him to whom the darkness is as light as day; and to be seen hereafter, a few of them—but how few—when future men of science shall do for this mid-Atlantic sea-floor what Dr. Carpenter and Dr. Wyville Thomson have done for the North Atlantic, and open one more page of that book which has, to us creatures of a day, though not to Him who wrote it as the Time-pattern of His timeless mind, neither beginning nor end.

So, for want of animal life to study, we were driven to study the human life around us, pent up there in our little iron world. But to talk too much of fellow-passengers is (though usual enough just now) neither altogether fair nor kind. We see in travel but the outside of people, and as we know nothing of their inner history, and little, usually, of

their antecedents, the pictures which we might sketch of them would be probably as untruthfully as rashly drawn. Crushed together, too, perforce, against each other, people are apt on board ship to make little hasty confidences, to show unawares little weaknesses, which should be forgotten all round the moment they step on shore and return to something like a normal state of society. The wisest and most humane rule for a traveller toward his companions is to

> " Be to their faults a little blind ;
> Be to their virtues very kind ; "

and to consider all that is said and done on board, like what passes among the members of the same club, as on the whole private and confidential. So let it suffice that there were on board the good steamship Shannon, as was to be expected, plenty of kind, courteous, generous, intelligent people ; officials, travellers—one, happy man ! away to discover new birds on the yet unexplored Rio Magdalena, in New Grenada; planters, merchants, what not, all ready, when once at St. Thomas's, to spread themselves over the islands, and the Spanish Main, and the Isthmus of Panama, and after that, some of them, down the Pacific shore to Callao and Valparaiso. The very names of their different destinations, and the imagination of the wonders they would see (though we were going to a spot as full of wonders as any), raised something like envy in our breasts, all the more

because most of them persisted in tantalizing us, in the hospitable fashion of all West Indians, by fruitless invitations to islands and ports, which to have seen were "a joy for ever."

But almost the most interesting group of all was one of Cornish miners, from the well-known old Redruth and Camborne county, and the old sacred hill of Carn-brea, who were going to seek their fortunes awhile in silver mines among the Andes, leaving wives and children at home, and hoping, "if it please God, to do some good out there," and send their earnings home. Stout, bearded, high-cheek-boned men they were, dressed in the thick coats and rough caps, and, of course, in the indispensable black cloth trousers, which make a miner's full dress; and their faces lighted up at the old pass-word of "Down-Along;" for whosoever knows Down-Along, and the speech thereof, is at once a friend and a brother. We had many a pleasant talk with them ere we parted at St. Thomas's.

And on to St. Thomas's we were hurrying; and, thanks to the north-east wind, as straight as a bee-line. On the third day we ran two hundred and fifty-four miles; on the fourth two hundred and sixty; and on the next day, at noon, where should we be? Nearing the Azores; and by midnight, running past them, and away on the track of Columbus, towards the Sargasso Sea.

We stayed up late on the night of December 7, in hopes of seeing, as we passed Terceira, even the loom of the land: but the moon was down; and a glimpse of the "Pico" at dawn next morning was our only chance of seeing, at least for this voyage, those wondrous Isles of the Blest—Isles of the Blest of old; and why not still? They too are said to be earthly paradises in soil, climate, productions; and yet no English care to settle there, nor even to go thither for health, though the voyage from Lisbon is but a short one, and our own mail steamers, were it made worth their while, could as easily touch at Terceira now as they did a few years since.

And as we looked out into the darkness, we could not but recollect, with a flush of pride, that yonder on the starboard beam lay Flores, and the scene of that great fight off the Azores, on August 30, 1591, made ever memorable by the pen of Walter Raleigh—and of late by Mr. Froude; in which the Revenge, with Sir Richard Grenville for her captain, endured for twelve hours, before she struck, the attack of eight great Spanish armadas, of which two (three times her own burden) sank at her side; and after all her masts were gone, and she had been three times boarded without success, defied to the last the whole fleet of fifty-one sail, which lay around her, waiting, "like dogs around the dying forest-king," for the Englishman to strike or sink. Yonder away

it was, that, wounded again and again, and shot through body and through head, Sir Richard Grenville was taken on board the Spanish Admiral's ship to die; and gave up his gallant ghost with those once-famous words: "Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind; for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought, fighting for his country, queen, religion and honour; my soul willingly departing from this body, leaving behind the lasting fame of having behaved as every valiant soldier is in his duty bound to do."

Yes; we were on the track of the old sea-heroes; of Drake and Hawkins, Carlile and Cavendish, Cumberland and Raleigh, Preston and Sommers, Frobisher and Duddeley, Keymis and Whiddon, which last, in that same Flores fight, stood by Sir Richard Grenville all alone, and, in "a small ship called the Pilgrim, hovered all night to see the successe: but in the morning, bearing with the Revenge, was hunted like a hare amongst many ravenous houndes, but escaped"[1]—to learn, in after years, in company with hapless Keymis, only too much about that Trinidad and Gulf of Paria whither we were bound.

Yes. There were heroes in England in those days. Are we, their descendants, degenerate from them? I, for one, believe not. But they were taught—what we take pride in refusing to be taught—namely, to obey.

[1] Raleigh's "Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Iles of Azores."

The morning dawned: but Pico, some fifty miles away, was taking his morning bath among the clouds, and gave no glimpse of his eleven thousand feet crater cone, now capped, they said, with winter snow. Yet neither last night's outlook nor that morning's was without result. For as the steamer stopped last night to pack her engines, and slipped along under sail at some three knots an hour, we made out clearly that the larger diffused patches of phosphorescence were Medusæ, slowly opening and shutting, and rolling over and over now and then, giving out their light, as they rolled, seemingly from the thin limb alone, and not from the crown of their bell. And as we watched, a fellow-passenger told how, between Ceylon and Singapore, he had once witnessed that most rare and unexplained phenomenon of a "milky sea," of which Dr. Collingwood writes (without, if I remember right, having seen it himself) in his charming book "A Naturalist's Rambles in the China Seas." Our friend described the appearance as that of a sea of shining snow rather than of milk, heaving gently beneath a starlit but moonless sky. A bucket of water, when taken up, was filled with the same half-luminous whiteness, which stuck to its sides when the water was drained off. The captain of the Indiaman was well enough aware of the rarity of the sight to call all the passengers on deck to see what they would never see again; and on asking our captain, he assured us

that he had not only never seen, but never heard of the appearance in the West Indies. One curious fact, then, was verified that night.

The next morning gave us unmistakeable tokens that we were nearing the home of the summer and the sun. A north-east wind, which would in England keep the air at least at freezing in the shade, gave here a temperature just over 60°; and gave clouds, too, which made us fancy for a moment that we were looking at an April thunder-sky, soft, fantastic, barred, and feathered, bright white where they ballooned out above into cumuli, rich purple in their massive shadows, and dropping from their under edges long sheets of inky rain. Thanks to the brave North-Easter, we had gained in five days thirty degrees of heat, and had slipped out of December into May. The North-Easter, too, was transforming itself more and more into the likeness of a south-west wind; say, rather, renewing its own youth, and becoming once more what it was when it started on its long journey from the Tropics towards the Pole. As it rushes back across the ocean, thrilled and expanded by the heat, it opens its dry and thirsty lips to suck in the damp from below, till, saturated once more with steam, it will reach the tropic as a grey rain-laden sky of North-East Trade.

So we slipped on, day after day, in a delicious repose which

yet was not monotonous. Those, indeed, who complain of the monotony of a voyage must have either very few resources in their own minds, or much worse company than we had on board the Shannon. Here, every hour brought, or might bring, to those who wished, not merely agreeable conversation about the Old World behind us, but fresh valuable information about the New World before us. One morning, for instance, I stumbled on a merchant returning to Surinam, who had fifty things to tell of his own special business—of the woods, the drugs, the barks, the vegetable oils, which he was going back to procure—a whole new world of yet unknown wealth and use. Most cheering, too, and somewhat unexpected, were the facts we heard of the improving state of our West India Colonies, in which the tide of fortune seems to have turned at last, and the gallant race of planters and merchants, in spite of obstacle on obstacle, some of them unjust and undeserved, are winning their way back (in their own opinion) to a prosperity more sound and lasting than that which collapsed so suddenly at the end of the great French war. All spoke of the emancipation of the slaves in Cuba (an event certain to come to pass ere long) as the only condition which they required to put them on an equal footing with any producers whatsoever in the New World.

However pleasant, though, the conversation might be,

the smallest change in external circumstances, the least break in the perpetual—

"Quocumque adspicias, nil est nisi pontus et aer,"

even a passing bird, if one would pass, which none would do save once or twice a stately tropic-bird, wheeling round aloft like an eagle, was hailed as an event in the day; and, on the 9th of December, the appearance of the first fragments of gulf-weed caused quite a little excitement, and set an enthusiastic pair of naturalists—a midland hunting squire, and a travelled scientific doctor who had been twelve years in the Eastern Archipelago—fishing eagerly over the bows, with an extemporised grapple of wire, for gulf-weed, a specimen of which they did not catch. However, more and more still would come in a day or two, perhaps whole acres, even whole leagues, and then (so we hoped, but hoped in vain) we should have our feast of zoophytes, crustacea, and what not.

Meanwhile, it must be remembered that this gulf-weed has not, as some of the uninitiated fancy from its name, anything to do with the gulf-stream, along the southern edge of which we were steaming. Thrust away to the south by that great ocean-river, it lies in a vast eddy, or central pool of the Atlantic, between the gulf-stream and the equatorial current, unmoved save by surface-drifts of wind, as floating

weeds collect and range slowly round and round in the still corners of a tumbling-bay or salmon pool. One glance at a bit of the weed, as it floats past, showed that it is like no Fucus of our shores, or anything we ever saw before. The difference of look is undefinable in words, but clear enough. One sees in a moment that the Sargassos, of which there are several species on Tropical shores, are a genus of themselves and by themselves; and a certain awe may, if the beholder be at once scientific and poetical, come over him at the first sight of this famous and unique variety thereof, which has lost ages since the habit of growing on rock or sea-bottom, but propagates itself for ever floating; and feeds among its branches a whole family of fish, crabs, cuttle-fish, zoophytes, mollusks, which, like the plant which shelters them, are found nowhere else in the world. And that awe, springing from "the scientific use of the imagination," would be increased if he recollected the theory—not altogether impossible—that this sargasso (and possibly some

Gulf-weed.

of the animals which cling to it) marks the site of an Atlantic continent, sunk long ages since; and that, transformed by the necessities of life from a rooting to a floating plant,

"Still it remembers its august abodes,"

and wanders round and round as if in search of the rocks where it once grew. We looked eagerly day by day for more and more gulf-weed, hoping that

"Slimy things would crawl with legs
Upon that slimy sea,"

and thought of the memorable day when Columbus' ship first plunged her bows into the tangled "ocean meadow," and the sailors, naturally enough, were ready to mutiny, fearing hidden shoals, ignorant that they had four miles of blue water beneath their keel, and half recollecting old Greek and Phœnician legends of a weedy sea off the coast of Africa, where the vegetation stopped the ships and kept them entangled till all on board were starved.

Day after day we passed more and more of it, often in long processions, ranged in the direction of the wind; while, a few feet below the surface, here and there floated large fronds of a lettuce-like weed, seemingly an ulva, the bright green of which, as well as the rich orange hue of the sargasso, brought out by contrast the intense blue of the water.

Very remarkable, meanwhile, and unexpected, was the

opacity and seeming solidity of the ocean when looked down on from the bows. Whether sapphire under the sunlight, or all but black under the clouds, or laced and streaked with beads of foam, rising out of the nether darkness, it looks as if it could resist the hand; as if one might almost walk on it; so unlike any liquid, as seen near shore or inland, is this leaping, heaving plain, reminding one, by its innumerable conchoidal curves, not of water, not even of ice, but rather of obsidian.

After all we got little of the sargasso. Only in a sailing ship, and in calms or light breezes, can its treasures be explored. Twelve knots an hour is a pace sufficient to tear off the weed, as it is hauled alongside, all living things which are not rooted to it. We got, therefore, no Crustacea; neither did we get a single specimen of the Calamaries,[1] which may be described as cuttle-fish carrying hooks on their arms as well as suckers, the lingering descendants of a most ancient form, which existed at least as far back as the era of the shallow oolitic seas, x or y thousand years ago. A tiny curled Spirorbis, a Lepraria, with its thousandfold cells, and a tiny polype belonging to the Campanularias, with a creeping stem, which sends up here and there a yellow-stalked bell, were all the parasites we saw. But the sargasso itself is a curious instance of the fashion in

[1] *Chiroteuthi* and *Onychoteuthi.*

which one form so often mimics another of a quite different family. When fresh out of the water it resembles not a sea-weed so much as a sprig of some willow-leaved shrub, burdened with yellow berries, large and small; for every broken bit of it seems growing, and throwing out ever new berries and leaves—or what, for want of a better word, must be called leaves in a sea-weed. For it must be remembered that the frond of a sea-weed is not merely leaf, but root also; that it not only breathes air, but feeds on water; and that even the so-called root by which a sea-weed holds to the rock is really only an anchor, holding mechanically to the stone, but not deriving, as the root of a land-plant would, any nourishment from it. Therefore it is, that to grow while uprooted and floating, though impossible to most land-plants, is easy enough to many sea-weeds, and especially to the sargasso.

The flying-fish now began to be a source of continual amusement, as they scuttled away from under the bows of the ship, mistaking her, probably, for some huge devouring whale. So strange are they when first seen, though long read of and long looked for, that it is difficult to recollect that they are actually fish. The first little one was mistaken for a dragon-fly, the first big one for a grey plover. The flight is almost exactly like that of a quail or partridge—flight, I must say; for, in spite of all that has been learnedly written to the contrary, it was too difficult as yet for

the English sportsmen on board to believe that their motion was not a true flight, aided by the vibration of the wings, and not a mere impulse given (as in the leap of the salmon) by a rush under water. That they can change their course at will is plain to one who looks down on them from the lofty deck, and still more from the paddle-box. The length of the flight seems too great to be attributed to a few strokes of the tail; while the plain fact that they renew their flight after touching, and only touching, the surface, would seem to show that it was not due only to the original impetus, for that would be retarded, instead of being quickened, every time they touched. Such were our first impressions: and they were confirmed by what we saw on the voyage home.

The nights as yet, we will not say disappointed us,—for to see new stars, like Canopus and Fomalhaut, shining in the far south, even to see Sirius, in his ever-changing blaze of red and blue, riding high in a December heaven, is interesting enough; but the brilliance of the stars is not, at least at this season, equal to that of a frosty sky in England. Nevertheless, to make up for the deficiency, the clouds were glorious; so glorious, that I longed again and again, as I did afterwards in the West Indies, that Mr. Ruskin were by my side, to see and to describe, as none but he can do. The evening skies are fit weeds for widowed Eos weeping over the dying Sun; thin, formless, rent—in carelessness, not in rage; and of all the

hues of early autumn leaves, purple and brown, with green and primrose lakes of air between: but all hues weakened, mingled, chastened into loneliness, tenderness, regretfulness, through which still shines, in endless vistas of clear western light, the hope of the returning day. More and more faint, the pageant fades below towards the white haze of the horizon, where, in sharpest contrast, leaps and welters against it the black jagged sea; and richer and richer it glows upwards, till it cuts the azure overhead: until, only too soon—

> "The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,
> At one stride comes the dark,"

to be succeeded, after the long balmy night, by a sunrise which repeats the colours of the sunset, but this time gaudy, dazzling, triumphant, as befits the season of faith and hope. Such imagery, it may be said, is hackneyed now, and trite even to impertinence. It might be so at home; but here, in presence of the magnificent pageant of tropic sunlight, it is natural, almost inevitable; and the old myth of the daily birth and death of Helios, and the bridal joys and widowed tears of Eos, re-invents itself in the human mind, as soon as it asserts its power—it may be, its sacred right—to translate nature into the language of the feelings.

And, meanwhile, may we not ask—have we not a right—founded on that common sense of the heart which often is the deepest reason—to ask, If we, gross and purblind mortals,

can perceive and sympathise with so much beauty in the universe, then how much must not He perceive, with how much must not He sympathise, for whose pleasure all things are, and were created? Who that believes (and rightly) the sense of beauty to be among the noblest faculties of man, will deny that faculty to God, who conceived man and all besides?

Wednesday, the 15th, was a really tropic day; blazing heat in the forenoon, with the thermometer at 82° in the shade, and in the afternoon stifling clouds from the south-west, where a dark band of rain showed, according to the planters' dictum, showers over the islands, which we were nearing fast. At noon we were only two hundred and ten miles from Sombrero, "the Spanish Hat," a lonely island, which is here the first outlier of the New World. We ought to have passed it by sunrise on the 16th, and by the afternoon reached St. Thomas's, where our pleasant party would burst like a shell in all directions, and scatter its fragments about all coasts and isles—from Demerara to Panama, from Mexico to the Bahamas. So that day was to the crew a day of hard hot work—of lifting and sorting goods on the main-deck, in readiness for the arrival at St. Thomas's, and of moving forwards two huge empty boilers, which had graced our spar-deck, filled with barrels of onions and potatoes, all the way from Southampton. But, in the soft hot evening hours, time was found for the

usual dance on the quarter-deck, with the band under the awning, and lamps throwing fantastic shadows, and waltzing couples, and the crew clustering aft to see, while we old folks looked on, with our "Ludite dum lubet, pueri," till the captain bade the sergeant-at-arms leave the lights burning for an extra half-hour; and "Sir Roger de Coverley" was danced out, to the great amusement of the foreigners, at actually half-past eleven. After which unexampled dissipation, all went off to rest, promising to themselves and their partners that they would get up at sunrise to sight Sombrero.

But, as it befel, morning's waking brought only darkness, the heavy pattering of a tropic shower, and the absence of the everlasting roll of the paddle-wheels. We were crawling slowly along, in thick haze and heavy rain, having passed Sombrero unseen; and were away in a grey shoreless world of waters, looking out for Virgin Gorda; the first of those numberless isles which Columbus, so goes the tale, discovered on St. Ursula's day, and named them after the Saint and her eleven thousand mythical virgins. Unfortunately, English buccaneers have since then given to most of them less poetic names. The Dutchman's Cap, Broken Jerusalem, The Dead Man's Chest, Rum Island, and so forth, mark a time and a race more prosaic, but still more terrible, though not one whit more wicked and brutal, than the Spanish Con-

quisitadores, whose descendants, in the seventeenth century, they smote hip and thigh with great destruction.

The furthest of these Virgin Islands is St. Thomas's. And there ended the first and longer part of a voyage unmarred by the least discomfort, discourtesy, or dulness, and full of enjoyment, for which thanks are due alike to captain, officers, crew, and passengers, and also to our much-maligned friend the North-East wind, who caught us up in the chops of the Channel, helped us graciously on nearly to the tropic of Cancer, giving us a more prosperous passage than the oldest hands recollect at this season, and then left us for a while to the delicious calms of the edge of the tropic, to catch us up again as the North-East Trade.

Truly, this voyage had already given us much for which to thank God. If safety and returning health, in an atmosphere in which the mere act of breathing is a pleasure, be things for which to be thankful, then we had reason to say in our hearts that which is sometimes best unsaid on paper.

Our first day in a tropic harbour was spent in what might be taken at moments for a dream, did not shells and flowers remain to bear witness to its reality. It was on Friday morning, December 17th, that we first sighted the New World; a rounded hill some fifteen hundred feet high, which was the end of Virgin Gorda. That resolved itself, as we ran on, into a cluster of long, low islands; St. John's appearing next

on the horizon, then Tortola, and last of all St. Thomas's; all pink and purple in the sun, and warm-grey in the shadow, which again became, as we neared them one after the other, richest green, of scrub and down, with bright yellow and rusty rocks, plainly lava, in low cliffs along the shore. The upper outline of the hills reminded me, with its multitudinous little coves and dry gullies, of the Vivarais or Auvergne Hills; and still more of the sketches of the Chinese Tea-mountains in Fortune's book. Their water-line has been exposed, evidently for many ages, to the gnawing of the sea at the present level. Everywhere the lava cliffs are freshly broken, toppling down in dust and boulders, and leaving detached stacks and skerries, like that called the "Indians," from its supposed likeness to a group of red-brown savages afloat in a canoe. But, as far as I could see, there has been no upheaval since the land took its present shape. There is no trace of raised beaches, or of the terraces which would have inevitably been formed by upheaval on the soft sides of the lava hills. The numberless deep channels which part the isles and islets would rather mark depression still going on. Most beautiful meanwhile are the winding channels of blue water, like land-locked lakes, which part the Virgins from each other; and beautiful the white triangular sails of the canoe-rigged craft, which beat up and down them through strong currents and cockling seas. The clear air, the still soft outlines, the rich

and yet delicate colouring, stir up a sense of purity and freshness, and peace and cheerfulness, such as is stirred up by certain views of the Mediterranean and its shores; only broken by one ghastly sight—the lonely mast of the ill-fated Rhone, standing up still where she sank with all her crew, in the hurricane of 1867.

At length, in the afternoon, we neared the last point, and turning inside an isolated and crumbling hummock, the Dutchman's Cap, saw before us, at the head of a little narrow harbour, the scarlet and purple roofs of St. Thomas's, piled up among orange-trees, at the foot of a green corrie, or rather couple of corries, some eight hundred feet high. There it was, as veritable a Dutch-oven for cooking fever in, with as veritable a dripping-pan for the poison when concocted in the tideless basin below the town, as man ever invented. And we were not sorry when the superintendent, coming on board, bade us steam back again out of the port, and round a certain Water-island, at the back of which is a second and healthier harbour, the Gri-gri channel. In the port close to the town we could discern another token of the late famous hurricane, the funnels and masts of the hapless Columbia, which lies still on the top of the sunken floating dock, immovable, as yet, by the art of man.

But some hundred yards on our right was a low cliff, which was even more interesting to some of us than either the town

or the wreck; for it was covered with the first tropic vegetation which we had ever seen. Already on a sandy beach outside, we had caught sight of unmistakeable coco-nut trees; some of them, however, dying, dead, even snapped short off, either by the force of the hurricane, or by the ravages of the beetle, which seems minded of late years to exterminate the coco-nut throughout the West Indies; belonging, we are told, to the Elaters—fire-fly, or skip-jack beetles. His grub, like that of his cousin, our English wire-worm, and his nearer cousin, the great wire-worm of the sugar-cane, eats into the pith and marrow of growing shoots; and as the palm, being an endogen, increases from within by one bud, and therefore by one shoot only, when that is eaten out nothing remains for the tree but to die. And so it happens that almost every coco-nut grove which we have seen has a sad and shabby look as if it existed (which it really does) merely on sufferance.

But on this cliff we could see, even with the naked eye, tall Aloes, grey-blue Cerei like huge branching candelabra, and bushes the foliage of which was utterly unlike anything in Northern Europe; while above the bright deep green of a patch of Guinea-grass marked cultivation, and a few fruit trees round a cottage told, by their dark baylike foliage, of fruits whose names alone were known to us.

Round Water-island we went, into a narrow channel between steep green hills, covered to their tops, as late as 1845, with

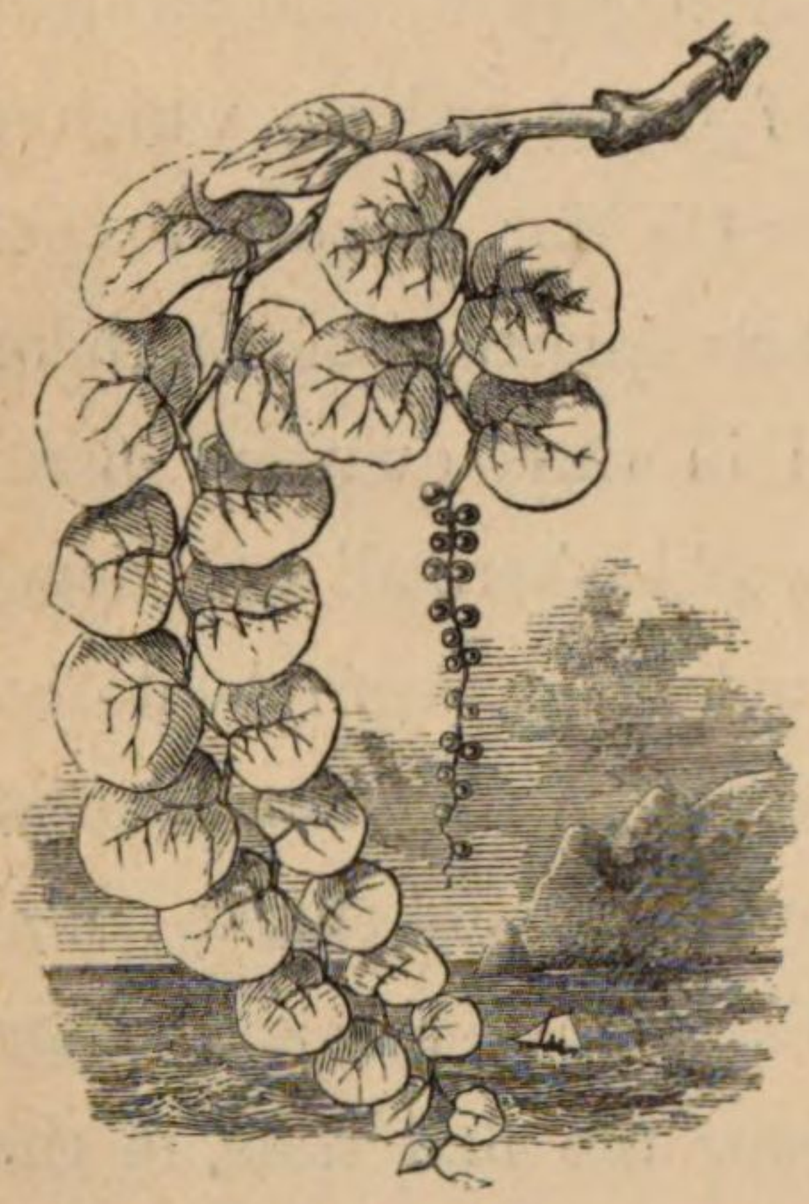
sugar-cane, but now only with scrub, among which the ruins of mills and buildings stood sad and lonely. But Nature in this land of perpetual summer hides with a kind of eagerness every scar which man in his clumsiness leaves on the earth's surface; and all, though relapsing into primæval wildness, was green, soft, luxuriant, as if the hoe had never torn the ground, contrasting strangely with the water-scene; with the black steamers snorting in their sleep; the wrecks and condemned hulks, in process of breaking up, strewing the shores with their timbers; the boatfuls of negroes gliding to and fro; and all the signs of our hasty, irreverent, wasteful, semi-barbarous mercantile system, which we call (for the time being only, it is to be hoped) civilization. The engine had hardly stopped, when we were boarded from a fleet of negro boats, and huge bunches of plantains, yams, green oranges, junks of sugar-cane, were displayed upon the deck; and more than one of the ladies went through the ceremony of initiation into West Indian ways, which consisted in sucking sugar-cane, first pared for the sake of their teeth. The negro's stronger incisors tear it without paring. Two amusing figures, meanwhile, had taken up their station close to the companion. Evidently privileged personages, they felt themselves on their own ground, and looked round patronizingly on the passengers, as ignorant foreigners who were too certain to be tempted by the treasures which they displayed

to need any solicitations. One went by the name of Jamaica Joe, a negro blacker than the night, in smart white coat and smart black trousers; a tall courtly gentleman, with the organ of self-interest, to judge from his physiognomy, very highly developed. But he was thrown into the shade by a stately brown lady, who was still very handsome — beautiful, if you will—and knew it, and had put on her gorgeous turban with grace, and plaited her short locks under it with care; and ignored the very existence of a mere negro like Jamaica Joe, as she sat by her cigars, and slow-match, and eau-de-cologne at four times the right price, and mats, necklaces, bracelets, made of mimosa-seeds, white negro hats, nests of Curaçoa baskets, and so forth. They drove a thriving trade among all new-comers: but were somewhat disgusted to find that we, though new to the West Indies, were by no means new to West Indian wares, and therefore not of the same mind as a gentleman and lady who came fresh from the town next day, with nearly a bushel of white branching madrepores, which they were going to carry as coals to Newcastle, six hundred miles down the islands. Poor Joe tried to sell us a nest of Curaçoa baskets for seven shillings; retired after a firm refusal; came up again to R——, after a couple of hours, and said, in a melancholy and reproachful voice, "Da—— take dem for four shillings and sixpence. I give dem you."

But now——. Would we go on shore? To the town? Not we, who came to see Nature, not towns. Some went off on honest business; some on such pleasure as can be found in baking streets, hotel bars, and billiard-rooms: but the one place on which our eyes were set was a little cove a quarter of a mile off, under the steep hill, where a white line of sand shone between blue water and green wood. A few yards broad of sand, and then impenetrable jungle, among which we could see, below, the curved yellow stems of the coco-nuts; and higher up the straight grey stems and broad fan-leaves of Carat palms; which I regret to say we did not reach. Oh for a boat to get into that paradise! There was three-quarters of an hour left, between dinner and dark; and in three-quarters of an hour what might not be seen in a world where all was new? The kind chief officer, bidding us not trust negro boats on such a trip, lent us one of the ship's, with four honest fellows, thankful enough to escape from heat and smoke; and away we went with two select companions—the sportsman and our scientific friend—to land, for the first time, in the New World.

As we leaped on shore on that white sand, what feelings passed through the heart of at least one of us, who found the dream of forty years translated into fact at last, are best, perhaps, left untold here. But it must be confessed that ere we

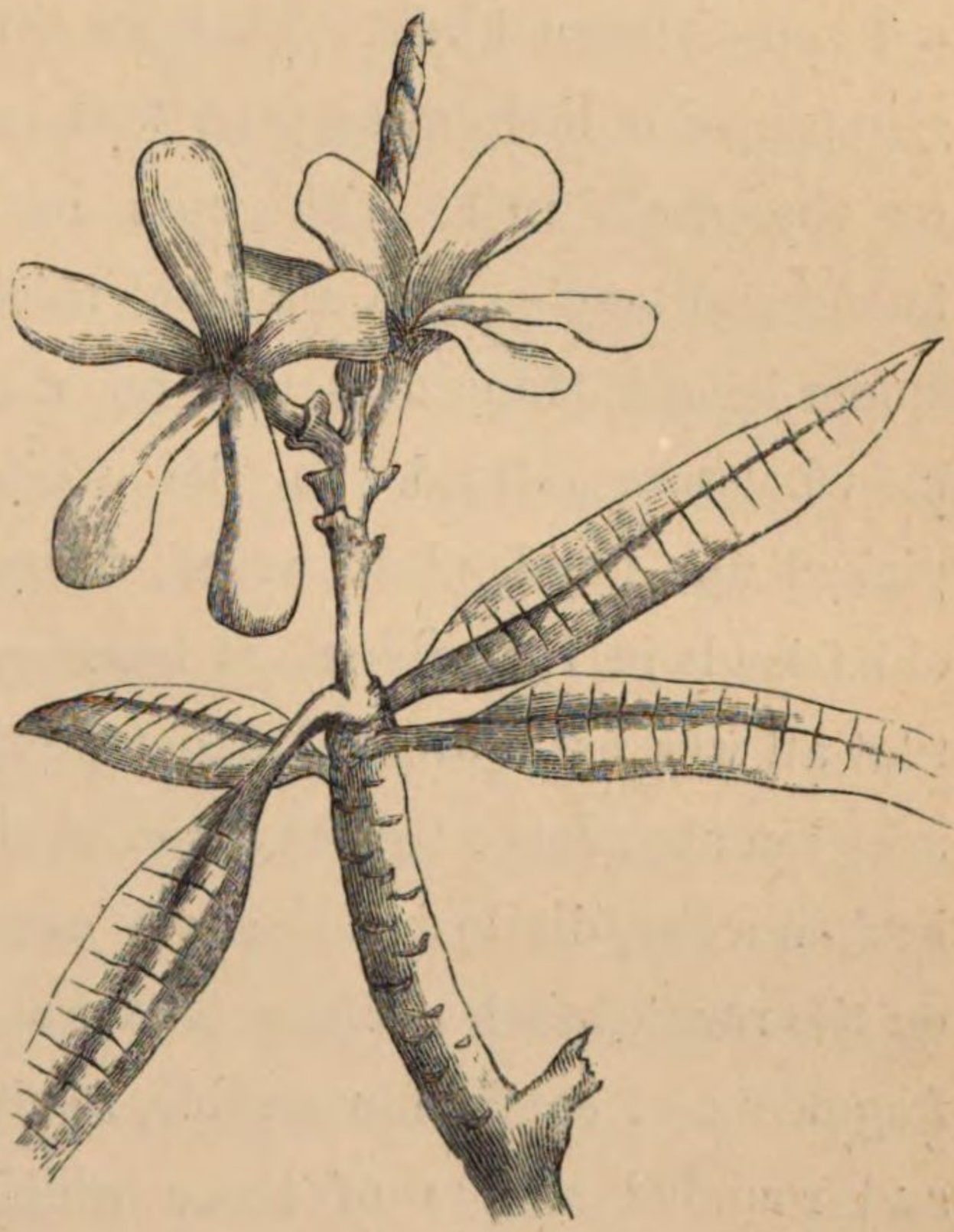
had stood for two minutes staring at the green wall opposite us, astonishment soon swallowed up, for the time, all other emotions. Astonishment, not at the vast size of anything, for the scrub was not thirty feet high; nor at the gorgeous colours, for very few plants or trees were in flower; but at the wonderful wealth of life. The massiveness, the strangeness, the variety, the very length of the young and still growing shoots was a wonder. We tried, at first in vain, to fix our eyes on some one dominant or typical form, while every form was clamouring, as it were, to be looked at, and a fresh Dryad gazed out of every bush, and with wooing eyes asked to be wooed again. The first two plants, perhaps, we looked steadily at were the Ipomœa pes capræ, lying along the sand in straight shoots thirty feet long, and growing longer, we fancied, while we looked at it, with large bilobed green leaves at every joint, and here and there a great purple convolvulus flower; and next, what we knew at once for the "shore-grape."[1] We had fancied it (and correctly) to be a mere low bushy tree with roundish



Sea-side Grape.

[1] Coccoloba uvifera.

leaves. But what a bush! with drooping boughs, arched over and through each other, shoots already six feet long, leaves as big as the hand shining like dark velvet, a crimson mid-rib down each, and tiled over each other,—"imbricated," as the botanists would say, in that fashion which gives its peculiar solidity and richness of light and shade to the foliage of an old sycamore; and among these noble shoots and noble leaves, pendent everywhere, long tapering spires of green grapes. This shore-grape, which the West Indians esteem as we might a bramble, we found to be, without exception, the most beautiful broad-leafed plant which we had ever seen. Then we admired the Frangipani,[1] a tall and almost leafless shrub with thick fleshy shoots, bearing, in this species, white flowers, which have the fragrance peculiar to certain white



Franyipani.

[1] Plumieria.

blossoms, to the jessamine, the tuberose, the orange, the Gardenia, the night-flowering Cereus; then the Cacti and Aloes; then the first coco-nut, with its last year's leaves pale yellow, its new leaves deep green, and its trunk ringing, when struck, like metal; then the sensitive plants; then creeping lianes of a dozen different kinds. Then we shrank back from our first glimpse of a little swamp of foul brown water, backed up by the sand-brush, with trees in every stage of decay, fallen and tangled into a doleful thicket, through which the spider-legged Mangroves rose on stilted roots. We turned, in wholesome dread, to the white beach outside, and picked up—amid, alas! wreck, everywhere wreck—shells—old friends in the cabinets at home—as earnests to ourselves that all was not a dream: delicate prickly Pinnæ; "Noah's-arks" in abundance; great Strombi, their lips and outer shell broken away, disclosing the rosy cameo within, and looking on the rough beach pitifully tender and flesh-like; lumps and fragments of coral innumerable, reminding us by their worn and rounded shapes of those which abound in so many secondary strata; and then hastened on board the boat; for the sun had already fallen, the purple night set in, and from the woods on shore a chorus of frogs had commenced chattering, quacking, squealing, whistling, not to cease till sunrise.

So ended our first trip in the New World; and we got back to the ship, but not to sleep. Already a coal-barge lay

on either side of her, and over the coals we scrambled, through a scene which we would fain forget. Black women on one side were doing men's work, with heavy coal-baskets on their heads, amid screaming, chattering, and language of which, happily, we understood little or nothing. On the other, a gang of men and boys, who, as the night fell, worked, many of them, altogether naked, their glossy bronze figures gleaming in the red lamp-light, and both men and women singing over their work in wild choruses, which, when the screaming cracked voices of the women were silent, and the really rich tenors of the men had it to themselves, were not unpleasant. A lad, seeming the poet of the gang, stood on the sponson, and in the momentary intervals of work improvised some story, while the men below took up and finished each verse with a refrain, piercing, sad, running up and down large and easy intervals. The tunes were many and seemingly familiar, all barbaric, often ending in the minor key, and reminding us much, perhaps too much, of the old Gregorian tones. The words were all but unintelligible. In one song we caught "New York" again and again, and then, "Captain he heard it, he was troubled in him mind."

"Ya-he-ho-o-hu"—followed the chorus.

"Captain he go to him cabin, he drink him wine and whisky—"

"Ya-he," &c.

* * * * *

"You go to America? You as well go to heaven."

"Ya-he," &c.

These were all the scraps of negro poetry which we could overhear; while on deck the band was playing quadrilles and waltzes, setting the negro shoveller dancing in the black water at the barge-bottom, shovel in hand; and pleasant white folks danced under the awning, till the contrast between the refinement within, and the brutality without, became very painful. For brutality it was, not merely in the eyes of the sentimentalist, but in that of the moralist; still more in the eyes of those who try to believe that all God's human children may be somewhen, somewhere, somehow, reformed into His likeness. We were shocked to hear that at another island the evils of coaling are still worse; and that the white authorities have tried in vain to keep them down. The coaling system is, no doubt, demoralizing in itself, as it enables negroes of the lowest class to earn enough in one day to keep them in idleness, even in luxury, for a week or more, till the arrival of the next steamer. But what we saw proceeded rather from the mere excitability and coarseness of half-civilized creatures than from any deliberate depravity; and we were told that, in the island just mentioned, the negroes, when forced to coal on Sunday, or on Christmas-day, always

abstain from noise or foul language, and, if they sing, sing nothing but hymns. It is easy to sneer at such a fashion as formalism. It would be wiser to consider whether the first step in religious training must not be obedience to some such external positive law; whether the savage must not be taught that there are certain things which he ought never to do, by being taught that there is one day at least on which he shall not do them. How else is man to learn that the Laws of Right and Wrong, like the laws of the physical world, are entirely independent of him, his likes or dislikes, knowledge or ignorance of them; that by Law he is environed from his cradle to his grave, and that it is at his own peril that he disobeys the Law? A higher religion may, and ought to, follow, one in which the Law becomes a Law of Liberty, and a Gospel, because it is loved, and obeyed for its own sake; but even he who has attained to that must be reminded again and again, alas! that the Law which he loves does not depend for its sanction on his love of it, on his passing frames or feelings; but is as awfully independent of him as it is of the veriest heathen. And that lesson the Sabbath does teach as few or no other institutions can. The man who says, and says rightly, that to the Christian all days ought to be sabbaths, may be answered, and answered rightly, "All the more reason for keeping one day which shall be a sabbath whether you are in a sabbatical mood or not.

All the more reason for keeping one day holy, as a pattern of what all days should be." So we will be glad if the Negro has got thus far, as an earnest that he may some day get further still.

That night, however, he kept no Sabbath, and we got no sleep; and were glad enough, before sunrise, to escape once more to the cove we had visited the evening before; not that it was prettier or more curious than others, but simply because it is better, for those who wish to learn accurately, to see one thing twice than many things once. A lesson is never learnt till it is learnt over many times, and a spot is best understood by staying in it and mastering it. In natural history the old scholar's saw of "Cave hominem unius libri," may be paraphrased by "He is a thoroughly good naturalist who knows one parish thoroughly."

So back to our little beach we went, and walked it all over again, finding, of course, many things which had escaped us the night before. We saw our first Melocactus, and our first night-blowing Cereus creeping over the rocks. We found our first tropic orchid, with white, lilac, and purple flowers on a stalk three feet high. We saw our first wild pines (Tillandsias, &c.) clinging parasitic on the boughs of strange trees, or nestling among the angular limb-like shoots of the columnar Cereus. We learnt to distinguish the poisonous Manchineel; and were thankful, in serious earnest,

that we had happily plucked none the night before, when we were snatching at every new leaf; for its milky juice, by mere dropping on the skin, burns like the poisoned tunic of Nessus, and will even, when the head is injured by it, cause blindness and death. We gathered a nosegay of the loveliest flowers, under a burning sun, within ten days of Christmas; and then wandered off the shore up a little path in the red lava, toward a farm where we expected to see fresh curiosities, and not in vain. On one side of the path a hedge of Pinguin (Bromelia)—the plants like huge pine-apple plants without the fruit—was but three feet high, but from its prickles utterly impenetrable to man or beast; and inside the hedge, a tree like a straggling pear, with huge green calabashes growing out of its bark—here was actually Crescentia Cujete—the plaything of one's childhood—alive and growing. The other side was low scrub—prickly shrubs like acacias and mimosas, covered with a creeping vine with brilliant yellow hair (we had seen it already from the ship, gilding large patches of the slopes), most like European dodder. Among it rose the tall Calotropis procera, with its fleshy grey stems and leaves, and its azure of lovely lilac flowers, with curious columns of stamens in each—an Asclepiad introduced from the Old World, where it ranges from tropical Africa to Affghanistan; and so on, and so on, up to a little farmyard, very like a Highland one in most things, want

of neatness included, save that huge spotted Trochi were scattered before the door, instead of buckies or periwinkles; and in the midst of the yard grew, side by side, the common accompaniment of a West India kitchen door, the magic trees, whose leaves rubbed on the toughest meat make it tender on the spot, and whose fruit makes the best of sauce or pickle to be eaten therewith—namely, a male and female Papaw (Carica Papaya), their stems some fifteen feet high, with a flat crown of mallow-like leaves, just beneath which, in the male, grew clusters of fragrant flowerets, in the female, clusters of unripe fruit. On through the farmyard, picking fresh flowers at every step, and down to a shady cove (for the sun, even at eight o'clock in December, was becoming uncomfortably fierce), and again into the shore-grape wood. We had already discovered, to our pain, that almost everything in the bush had prickles, of all imaginable shapes and sizes; and now, touching a low tree, one of our party was seized as by a briar, through clothes and into skin, and, in escaping, found on the tree (Guilandina Bonducella) rounded prickly pods, which, being opened, proved to contain the grey horse-nicker-beads of our childhood.

Up and down the white sand we wandered, collecting shells, as did the sailors, gladly enough, and then rowed back, over a bottom of white sand, bedded here and there with the short manati-grass (Thalassia Testudinum), one of the few

flowering plants which, like our Zostera, or grasswrack, grows at the bottom of the sea. But, wherever the bottom was stony, we could see huge prickly sea-urchins, huger brainstone corals, round and grey, and branching corals likewise, such as, when cleaned, may be seen in any curiosity shop. These, and a flock of brown and grey pelicans, sailing over our head, were fresh tokens to us of where we were.

As we were displaying our nosegay on deck, on our return, to some who had stayed stifling on board, and who were inclined (as West Indians are) at once to envy and to pooh-pooh the superfluous energy of new-come Europeans, R—— drew out a large and lovely flower, pale yellow, with a tiny green apple or two, and leaves like those of an Oleander. The brown lady, who was again at her post on deck, walked up to her in silence, uninvited, and with a commanding air waved the thing away. "Dat manchineel. Dat poison. Throw dat overboard." R——, who knew it was not manchineel, whispered to a bystander, "Ce n'est pas vrai." But the brown lady was a linguist. "Ah! mais c'est vrai," cried she, with flashing teeth; and retired, muttering her contempt of English ignorance and impertinence.

And, as it befel, she was, if not quite right, at least not quite wrong. For when we went into the cabin, we and our unlucky yellow flower were flown at by another brown lady, in another gorgeous turban, who had become, on the voyage,

a friend and an intimate; for she was the nurse of the baby who had been the light of the eyes of the whole quarter-deck ever since we left Southampton—God bless it, and its mother, and beautiful Mon Nid, where she dwells beneath the rock, as exquisite as one of her own humming-birds. We were so scolded about this poor little green apple, that we set to work to find out what it was, after promising at least not to eat it. And it proved to be Thevetia neriifolia, and a very deadly poison.

This was the first (though by no means the last) warning which we got not to meddle rashly with "poison-bush," lest that should befal us which befel a scientific West Indian of old. For hearing much of the edible properties of certain European toad-stools, he resolved to try a few experiments in his own person on West Indian ones; during the course of which he found himself one evening, after a good toad-stool dinner, raving mad. The doctor was sent for, and brought him round, a humbled man. But a heavier humiliation awaited him, when his negro butler, who had long looked down on him for his botanical studies, entered with his morning cup of coffee. "Now, Massa," said he, in a tone of triumphant pity, "I think you no go out any more cut bush and eat him."

If we had wanted any further proof that we were in the Tropics, we might have had it in the fearful heat of the next few hours, when the Shannon lay with a steamer on

each side, one destined for "The Gulf," the other for "The Islands;" and not a breath of air was to be got till late in the afternoon, when (amid shaking of hands, and waving of handkerchiefs, as hearty as if we the "Island-bound" and they the "Gulf-bound," and the officers of the Shannon, had known each other fourteen years instead of fourteen days) we steamed out, past the Little Saba rock, which was said (but it seems incorrectly) to have burst into smoke and flame during the earthquake, and then away to the south and east for the Islands: having had our first taste, but, thank God, not our last, of the joys of the "Earthly Paradise."

The Bocas.

CHAPTER II.

DOWN THE ISLANDS.

I HAD heard and read much, from boyhood, about these "Lesser Antilles." I had pictured them to myself a thousand times: but I was altogether unprepared for their beauty and grandeur. For hundreds of miles, day after day, the steamer carried us past a shifting diorama of scenery, which may be likened to Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples, repeated again and again, with every possible variation of the same type of delicate loveliness.

Under a cloudless sky, upon a sea, lively yet not unpleasantly rough, we thrashed and leaped along. Ahead of

us, one after another, rose high on the southern horizon banks of grey cloud, from under each of which, as we neared it, descended the shoulder of a mighty mountain, dim and grey. Nearer still the grey changed to purple; lowlands rose out of the sea, sloping upwards with those grand and simple concave curves, which betoken, almost always, volcanic land. Nearer still, the purple changed to green. Tall palm-trees and engine-houses stood out against the sky; the surf gleamed white around the base of isolated rocks. A little nearer, and we were under the lee, or western side, of the island. The sea grew smooth as glass; we entered the shade of the island-cloud, and slid along in still unfathomable blue water, close under the shore of what should have been one of the Islands of the Blest.

It was easy, in presence of such scenery, to conceive the exaltation which possessed the souls of the first discoverers of the West Indies. What wonder if they seemed to themselves to have burst into Fairy-land—to be at the gates of The Earthly Paradise? With such a climate, such a soil, such vegetation, such fruits, what luxury must not have seemed possible to the dwellers along those shores? What riches too, of gold and jewels, might not be hidden among those forest-shrouded glens and peaks? And beyond, and beyond again, ever new islands, new continents perhaps, an inexhaustible wealth of yet undiscovered worlds.

No wonder that the men rose above themselves, for good and for evil; that having, as it seemed to them, found infinitely, they hoped infinitely, and dared infinitely. They were a dumb generation and an unlettered, those old Conquistadores. They did not, as we do now, analyse and describe their own impressions: but they felt them nevertheless; and felt them, it may be, all the more intensely, because they could not utter them; and so went, half intoxicate, by day and night, with the beauty and the wonder round them, till the excitement overpowered alike their reason and their conscience; and, frenzied with superstition and greed, with contempt and hatred of the heathen Indians, and often with mere drink and sunshine, they did deeds which, like all wicked deeds, avenge themselves, and are avenging themselves, from Mexico to Chili, unto this very day.

I said that these islands resembled Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples. Like causes have produced like effects; and each island is little but the peak of a volcano, down whose shoulders lava and ash have slidden toward the sea. Some carry several crater cones, complicating at once the structure and scenery of the island; but the majority carry but a single cone, like that little island, or rather rock, of Saba, which is the first of the Antilles under the lee of which the steamer passes. Santa Cruz, which is left to leeward, is a long, low, ragged island, of the same form as St. Thomas's

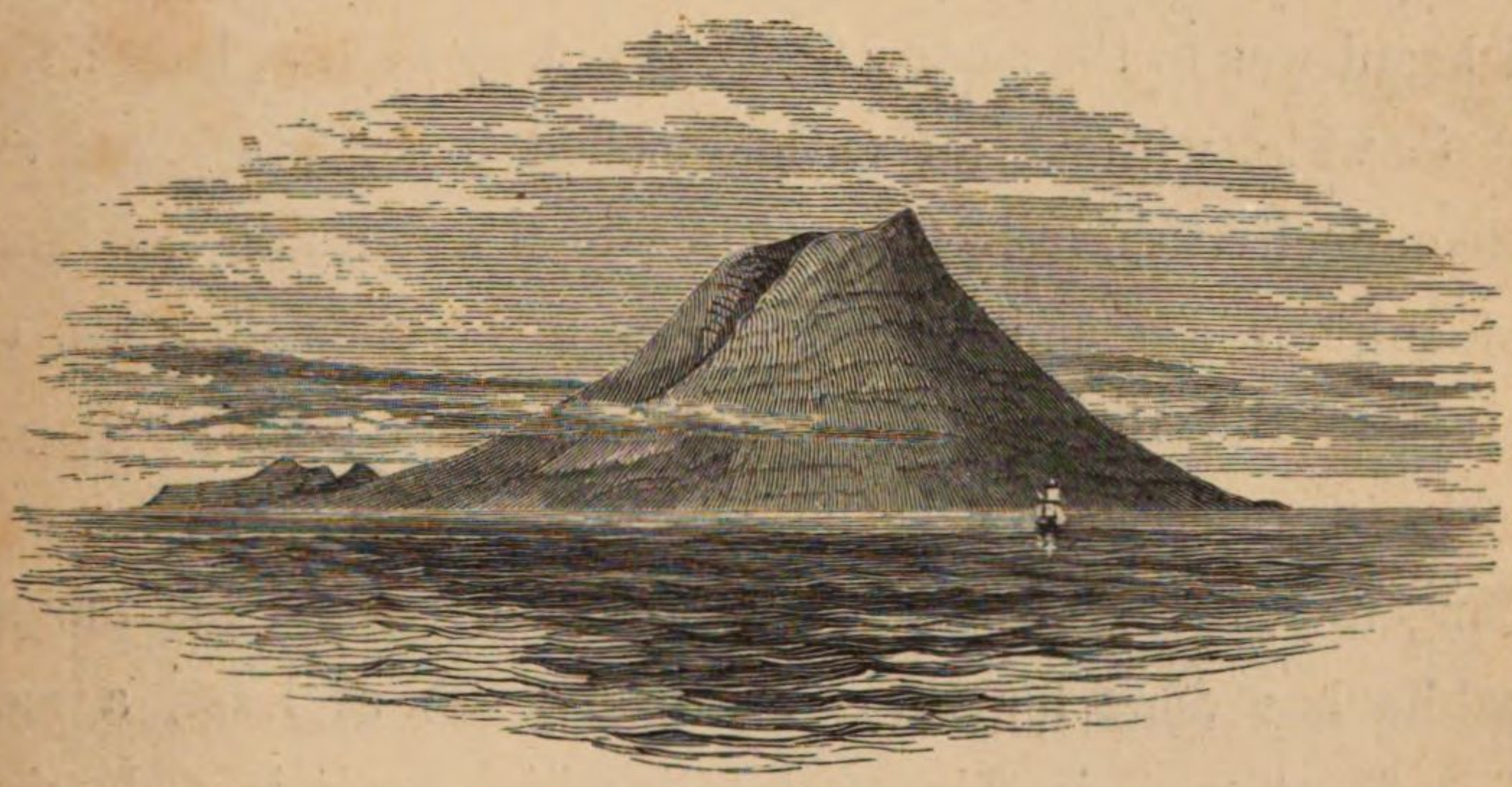
and the Virgins, and belonging, I should suppose, to the same formation. But Saba rises sheer out of the sea some 1,500 feet or more, without flat ground, or even harbour. From a little landing-place to leeward a stair runs up 800 feet into the bosom of the old volcano; and in that hollow live some 1,200 honest Dutch, and some 800 Negros, who were, till of late years, their slaves, at least in law. But in Saba, it is said, the whites were really the slaves, and the Negros the masters. For they went off whither and when they liked; earned money about the islands, and brought it home; expected their masters to keep them when out of work: and not in vain. The island was, happily for it, too poor for sugar-growing and the "Grande Culture;" the Dutch were never tempted to increase the number of their slaves; looked upon the few they had as friends and children; and when emancipation came, no change whatsoever ensued, it is said, in the semi-feudal relation between the black men and the white. So these good Dutch live peacefully aloft in their volcano, which it is to be hoped will not explode again. They grow garden crops; among which, I understand, are several products of the temperate zone, the air being, at that height, pleasantly cool. They sell their produce about the islands. They build boats up in the crater —the best boats in all the West Indies—and lower them down the cliff to the sea. They hire themselves out too, not having

lost their forefathers' sea-going instincts, as sailors about all those seas, and are, like their boats, the best in those parts. They all speak English; and though they are nominally Lutherans, are glad of the services of the excellent Bishop of Antigua, who pays them periodical visits. He described them as virtuous, shrewd, simple, healthy folk, retaining, in spite of the tropic sun, the same clear white and red complexions which their ancestors brought from Holland two hundred years ago—a proof, among many, that the white man need not degenerate in these isles.

Saba has, like most of these islands, its "Somma" like that of Vesuvius; an outer ring of lava, the product of older eruptions, surrounding a central cone, the product of some newer one. But even this latter, as far as I could judge by the glass, is very ancient. Little more than the core of the central cone is left. The rest has been long since destroyed by rains and winds. A white cliff at the south end of the island should be examined by geologists. It belongs probably to that formation of tertiary calcareous marl so often seen in the West Indies, especially at Barbados: but if so, it must, to judge from the scar which it makes seaward, have been upheaved long ago, and like the whole island—and indeed all the islands—betokens an immense antiquity.

Much more recent—in appearance at least—is the little

isle of St. Eustatius, or at least the crater-cone, with its lip broken down at one spot, which makes up five-sixths of the island. St. Eustatius may have been in eruption, though there is no record of it, during historic times, and looks more unrepentant and capable of misbehaving itself again than does any other crater-cone in the Antilles; far more so than the Souffrière in St. Vincent which exploded in 1812.



St. Eustatius.

But these two are mere rocks. It is not till the traveller arrives at St. Kitts that he sees what a West Indian island is.

The "Mother of the Antilles," as she is called, is worthy of her name. Everywhere from the shore the land sweeps up, slowly at first, then rapidly, toward the central mass, the rugged peak whereof goes by the name of Mount Misery.

Only once, and then but for a moment, did we succeed in getting a sight of the actual summit, so pertinaciously did the clouds crawl round it. 3,700 feet aloft a pyramid of black lava rises above the broken walls of an older crater, and is, to judge from its knife-edge, flat top, and concave eastern side, the last remnant of an inner cone which has been washed, or more probably blasted, away. Beneath it, according to the report of an islander to Dr. Davy (and what I heard was to the same effect), is a deep hollow, longer than it is wide, without an outlet, walled in by precipices and steep declivities, from fissures in which steam and the fumes of sulphur are emitted. Sulphur in crystals abounds, encrusting the rocks and loose stones; and a stagnant pool of rain-water occupies the bottom of the Souffrière. A dangerous neighbour—but as long as he keeps his temper, as he has done for three hundred years at least, a most beneficent one—is this great hill, which took, in Columbus' imagination, the form of the giant St. Christopher bearing on his shoulder the infant Christ, and so gave a name to the whole island.

From the lava and ash ejected from this focus, the whole soils of the island have been formed; soils of still unexhausted fertility, save when—as must needs be in a volanic region—patches of mere rapilli and scoriæ occur. The mountain has hurled these out; and everywhere, as a glance of the eye

shows, the tropic rains are carrying them yearly down to the lowland, exposing fresh surfaces to the action of the air, and, by continual denudation and degradation, remanuring the soil. Everywhere, too, are gullies sawn in the slopes, which terminate above in deep and narrow glens, giving, especially when alternated with long lava-streams, a ridge-and-furrow look to this and most other of the Antilles. Dr. Davy, with his usual acuteness of eye and soundness of judgment, attributes them rather to "water acting on loose volcanic ashes" than to "rents and fissures, the result of sudden and violent force." Doubtless he is in the right. Thus, and thus only, has been formed the greater part of the most beautiful scenery in the West Indies; and I longed again and again, as I looked at it, for the company of my friend and teacher, Colonel George Greenwood, that I might show him, on island after island, such manifold corroborations of his theories in "Rain and Rivers."

But our eyes were drawn off, at almost the second glance, from mountain-peaks and glens, to the slopes of cultivated lowland, sheeted with bright green cane, and guinea-grass, and pigeon pea; and that not for their own sakes, but for the sake of objects so utterly unlike anything which we had ever seen, that it was not easy, at first, to discover what they were. Grey pillars, which seemed taller than the tallest poplars, smooth and cylindrical as those of a Doric

temple, each carrying a flat head of darkest green, were ranged along roadsides and round fields, or stood, in groups or singly, near engine-works, or towered above rich shrubberies which shrouded comfortable country-houses. It was not easy, as I have said, to believe that these strange and noble things were trees: but such they were. At last we beheld, with wonder and delight, the pride of the West Indies, the Cabbage Palms —Palmistes of the French settlers—which botanists have well named Oreodoxa, the "glory of the mountains." We saw them afterwards a hundred times in their own native forests; and when they rose through tangled masses of richest vegetation, mixed with other and smaller species of palms, their form, fantastic though it was, harmonized well with hundreds of forms equally fantastic. But here they seemed, at first sight, out of place, incongruous, and artificial, standing amid no kindred forms, and towering over a cultivation and civilization which might have been mistaken, seen from the sea, for wealthy farms along some English shore. Gladly would we have gone on shore, were it but to have stood awhile under those Palmistes; and an invitation was not wanting to a pretty tree-shrouded house on a low cliff a mile off, where, doubtless, every courtesy and many a luxury would have awaited us. But it could not be. We watched kind folk rowed to shore without us; and then turned to watch the black flotilla under our quarter

The first thing that caught our eye on board the negro boats which were alongside was, of course, the baskets of fruits and vegetables, of which one of us at least had been hearing all his life. At St. Thomas's we had been introduced to bananas (figs, as they are miscalled in the West Indies); to the great green oranges, thick-skinned and fragrant; to those junks of sugar-cane, some two feet long, which Cuffy, and Cuffy's ladies, delight to gnaw, walking, sitting, and standing; increasing thereby the size of their lips, and breaking out, often enough, their upper front teeth. We had seen, and eaten too, the sweet sop[1]—a passable fruit, or rather congeries of fruits, looking like a green and purple strawberry, of the bigness of an orange. It is the cousin of the prickly sour-sop;[2] of the really delicious, but to me unknown, Chirimoya,[3] and of the custard apple,[4] containing a pulp which (as those who remember the delectable pages of Tom Cringle know) bears a startling likeness to brains. Bunches of grapes, at St. Kitts, lay among these; and at St. Lucia we saw with them, for the first time, Avocado, or Alligator pears, alias midshipman's butter;[5] large round brown fruits, to be eaten with pepper and salt by those who list. With these, in open baskets, lay bright scarlet capsicums, green coco-nuts tinged with orange, great roots of yam[6] and cush-cush,[7] with strange pulse of

[1] Anona squamosa. [2] A. muricata. [3] A. cherimolia. [4] A. reticulata.
[5] Persea gratissima. [6] Dioscorea. [7] Colocasia esculenta.

various kinds and hues. The contents of these vegetable baskets were often as gay-coloured as the gaudy gowns, and still gaudier turbans, of the women who offered them for sale.

Screaming and jabbering, the Negros and Negresses thrust each other's boats about, scrambled from one to the other with gestures of wrath and defiance, and seemed at every moment about both to fall to fisticuffs and to upset themselves among the sharks. But they did neither. Their excitement evaporated in noise. To their "ladies," to do them justice, the men were always civil, while the said "ladies" bullied them and ordered them about without mercy. The Negro women are, without doubt, on a more thorough footing of equality with the men than the women of any white race. The causes, I believe, are two. In the first place, there is less difference between the sexes in mere physical strength and courage; and watching the average Negresses, one can well believe the stories of those terrible Amazonian guards of the King of Dahomey, whose boast is, that they are no longer women, but men. There is no doubt that, in case of a rebellion, the black women of the West Indies would be as formidable, cutlass in hand, as the men. The other cause is the exceeding ease with which, not merely food, but gay clothes and ornaments, can be procured by light labour. The Negro woman has no need to marry and make herself the

slave of a man, in order to get a home and subsistence. Independent she is, for good and evil; and independent she takes care to remain; and no schemes for civilizing the Negro will have any deep or permanent good effect which do not take note of, and legislate for, this singular fact.

Meanwhile, it was a comfort to one fresh from the cities of the Old World, and the short and stunted figures, the mesquin and scrofulous visages, which crowd our alleys and back wynds, to see everywhere health, strength, and goodly stature, especially among women. Nowhere in the West Indies are to be seeh those haggard down-trodden mothers, grown old before their time, too common in England, and commoner still in France. Health, "rude" in every sense of the word, is the mark of the Negro woman, and of the Negro man likewise. Their faces shine with fatness; they seem to enjoy, they do enjoy, the mere act of living, like the lizard on the wall. It may be said—it must be said—that, if they be human beings (as they are), they are meant for something more than mere enjoyment of life. Well and good: but are they not meant for enjoyment likewise? Let us take the beam out of our own eye, before we take the mote out of theirs; let us, before we complain of them for being too healthy and comfortable, remember that we have at home here tens of thousands of paupers, rogues, whatnot, who are not a whit more civilized, intellectual, virtuous, or spiritual than

the Negro, and are meanwhile neither healthy nor comfortable. The Negro may have the corpus sanum without the mens sana. But what of those whose souls and bodies are alike unsound?

Away south, along the low spit at the south end of the island, where are salt-pans which, I suspect, lie in now extinguished craters; and past little Nevis, the conical ruin, as it were, of a volcanic island. It was probably joined to the low end of St. Kitts not many years ago. It is separated from it now only by a channel called the Narrows, some four to six miles across, and very shallow, there being not more than four fathoms in many places, and infested with reefs, whether of true coral or of volcanic rock I should be glad to know. A single peak, with its Souffrière, rises to some 2,000 feet; right and left of it are two lower hills, fragments, apparently, of a Somma, or older and larger crater. The lava and ash slide in concave slopes of fertile soil down to the sea, forming an island some four miles by three, which was in the seventeenth century a little paradise, containing 4,000 white citizens, who had dwindled down in 1805, under the baneful influences of slavery, to 1,300; in 1832 (the period of emancipation) to 500; and in 1854, to only 170.[1] A happy place, however, it is said still to be, with a population of more than 10,000, who, as there is happily no crown land in the

[1] Dr. Davy's "West Indies."

island, cannot squat, and so return to their original savagery; but are well-ordered and peaceable, industrious, and well-taught, and need, it is said, not only no soldiers, but no police.

One spot on the little island we should have liked much to have seen: the house where Nelson, after his marriage with Mrs. Nisbet, a lady of Nevis, dwelt awhile in peace and purity. Happier for him, perhaps, though not for England, had he never left that quiet nest.

And now, on the leeward bow, another grey mountain island rose; and on the windward another, lower and longer. The former was Montserrat, which I should have gladly visited, as I had been invited to do. For little Montserrat is just now the scene of a very hopeful and important experiment.[1] The Messrs. Sturge have established there a large plantation of limes, and a manufactory of lime-juice, which promises to be able to supply, in good time, vast quantities of that most useful of all sea-medicines.

Their connection with the Society of Friends, and indeed the very name of Sturge, is a guarantee that such a work will be carried on for the benefit, not merely of the capitalists, but of the coloured people who are employed. Already, I am assured, a marked improvement has taken place among them; and I, for one, heartily bid God-speed to the enterprise:

[1] An account of the Souffrière of Montserrat is given by Dr. Nugent; Geological Society's Transactions, vol. i., 1811.

to any enterprise, indeed, which tends to divert labour and capital from that exclusive sugar-growing which has been most injurious, I verily believe the bane, of the West Indies. On that subject, I may have to say more in a future chapter. I ask the reader, meanwhile, to follow, as the ship's head goes round to windward toward Antigua.

Antigua is lower, longer, and flatter than the other islands. It carries no central peak: but its wildness of ragged uplands forms, it is said, a natural fortress, which ought to be impregnable; and its loyal and industrious people boast, that, were every other West Indian island lost, the English might make a stand in Antigua long enough to enable them to reconquer the whole. I should have feared, from the look of the island, that no large force could hold out long in a country so destitute of water as those volcanic hills, rusty, ragged, treeless, almost sad and desolate—if any land could be sad and desolate with such a blue sea leaping around, and such a blue sky blazing above. Those who wish to know the agricultural capabilities of Antigua, and to know, too, the good sense and courage, the justice and humanity, which have enabled the Antiguans to struggle on and upward through all their difficulties, in spite of drought, hurricane, and earthquake, till permanent prosperity seems now become certain, should read Dr. Davy's excellent book, which I cannot too often recommend. For us, we could only

give a hasty look at its southern volcanic cliffs; while we regretted that we could not inspect the marine strata of the eastern parts of the island, with their calcareous marls and limestones, hardened clays and cherts, and famous silicified trees, which offer important problems to the geologist, as yet not worked out.[1]

We could well believe, as the steamer ran into English Harbour, that Antigua was still subject to earthquakes; and had been shaken, with great loss of property though not of life, in the Guadaloupe earthquake of 1843, when 5,000 lives were lost in the town of Point-à-Pitre alone. The only well-marked effect which Dr. Davy could hear of, apart from damage to artificial structures, was the partial sinking of a causeway leading to Rat Island, in the harbour of St. John. No wonder: if St. John's harbour be—as from its shape on the map it probably is—simply an extinct crater, or group of craters, like English Harbour. A more picturesque, or more uncanny little hole than that latter we had never yet seen: but there are many such harbours about these islands, which nature, for the time being at least, has handed over from the dominion of fire to that of water. Past low cliffs of ash and volcanic boulder, sloping westward to the sea, which

[1] For what is known of these, consult Dr. Nugent's "Memoir on the Geology of Antigua," Transactions of Geological Society, vol. v., 1821. See also Humboldt, "Personal Narrative," book v. cap. 14.

is eating them fast away, the steamer runs in through a deep crack, a pistol-shot in width. On the east side a strange section of grey lava and ash is gnawn into caves. On the right, a bluff rock of black lava dips sheer into water several fathoms deep; and you anchor at once inside an irregular group of craters, having passed through a gap in one of their sides, which has probably been torn out by a lava flow. Whether the land, at the time of the flow, was higher or lower than at present, who can tell? This is certain, that the first basin is for half of its circumference circular, and walled with ash beds, which seem to slope outward from it. To the left it leads away into a long creek, up which, somewhat to our surprise, we saw neat government-houses and quays; and between them and us, a noble iron-clad and other ships-of-war at anchor close against lava and ash cliffs. But right ahead, the dusty sides of the crater are covered with strange bushes, its glaring shingle spotted with bright green Manchineels; while on the cliffs around aloes innumerable, seemingly the imported American Agave, send up their groups of huge fat pointed leaves from crannies so arid, that one would fancy a moss would wither in them. A strange place it is, and strangely hot likewise; and one could not but fear a day—it is to be hoped long distant—when it will be hotter still.

Out of English Harbour, after taking on board fruit and bargaining for beads, for which Antigua is famous, we passed

the lonely rock of Redonda, toward a mighty mountain which lay under a sheet of clouds of corresponding vastness. That was Guadaloupe. The dark undersides of the rolling clouds mingled with the dark peaks and ridges, till we could not see where earth ended and vapour began; and the clouds from far to the eastward up the wind massed themselves on the island, and then ceased suddenly to leeward, leaving the sky clear and the sea brilliant.

I should be glad to know the cause of this phenomenon, which we saw several times among the islands, but never in greater perfection than on nearing Nevis from the south on our return. In that case, however, the cloud continued to leeward. It came up from the east for full ten miles, an advancing column of tall ghostly cumuli, leaden, above a leaden sea; and slid toward the island, whose lines seemed to leap up once to meet them; fail; then, in a second leap, to plunge the crater-peak high into the mist; and then to sink down again into the western sea, so gently that the line of shore and sea was indistinguishable. But above, the cloud-procession passed on, shattered by its contact with the mountain, and transfigured as it neared the setting sun into long upward streaming lines of rack, purple and primrose against a saffron sky, while Venus lingered low between cloud and sea, a spark of fire glittering through dull red haze.

And now the steamer ran due south, across the vast basin which is ringed round by Antigua, Montserrat, and Guadaloupe, with St. Kitts and Nevis showing like tall grey ghosts to the north-west. Higher and higher ahead rose the great mountain mass of Guadaloupe, its head in its own canopy of cloud. The island falls into the sea sharply to leeward. But it stretches out to windward in a long line of flat land edged with low cliff, and studded with large farms and engine-houses. It might be a bit of the Isle of Thanet, or of the Lothians, were it not for those umbrella-like Palmistes, a hundred feet high, which stand out everywhere against the sky. At its northern end, a furious surf was beating on a sandy beach; and beyond that, dim and distant, loomed up the low flat further island, known by the name of Grande Terre.

Guadaloupe, as some of my readers may know, consists, properly speaking, of two islands, divided by a swamp and a narrow salt-water river. The eastward half, or Grande Terre, which is composed of marine strata, is hardly seen in the island voyage, and then only at a distance, first behind the westward Basse Terre, and then behind other little islands, the Saintes and Mariegalante. But the westward island, rising in one lofty volcanic mass which hides the eastern island from view, is perhaps, for mere grandeur, the grandest in the Archipelago. The mountains—

among which are, it is said, fourteen extinct craters—range upward higher and higher toward the southern end, with corries and glens, which must be, when seen near, hanging gardens of stupendous size. The forests seem to be as magnificent as they were in the days of Père Labat. Tiny knots on distant cliffs-tops, when looked at through the glass, are found to be single trees of enormous height and breadth. Gullies hundreds of feet in depth, rushing downwards toward the sea, represent the rush of the torrents which have helped, through thousands of rainy seasons, to scoop them out and down.

But all this grandeur and richness culminates, toward the southern end, in one great crater-peak 5,000 feet in height, at the foot of which lies the Port of Basse Terre, or Bourg St. François.

We never were so fortunate as to see the Souffrière entirely free from cloud. The lower, wider, and more ancient crater, was generally clear: but out of the midst of it rose a second cone buried in darkness and mist. Once only we caught sight of part of its lip, and the sight was one not to be forgotten. The sun was rising behind the hills. The purple mountain was backed by clear blue sky. High above it hung sheets of orange cloud lighted from underneath; lower down, and close upon the hill-tops, curved sheets of bright white mist

> "Stooped from heaven, and took the shape,
> With fold on fold, of mountain and of cape."

And under them, again, the crater seethed with grey mist, among which, at one moment, we could discern portions of its lip; not smooth, like that of Vesuvius, but broken into awful peaks and chasms hundreds of feet in height. As the sun rose, level lights of golden green streamed round the peak right and left over the downs: but only for a while. As the sky-clouds vanished in his blazing rays, earth-clouds rolled up below from the valleys behind; wreathed and weltered about the great black teeth of the crater; and then sinking among them, and below them, shrouded the whole cone in purple darkness for the day; while in the foreground blazed in the sunshine broad slopes of cane-field; below them again the town, with handsome houses and old-fashioned churches and convents, dating possibly from the seventeenth century, embowered in mangos, tamarinds, and palmistes; and along the beach a market beneath a row of trees, with canoes drawn up to be unladen, and gay dresses of every hue. The surf whispered softly on the beach. The cheerful murmur of voices came off the shore, and above it the tinkling of some little bell, calling good folks to early mass. A cheery, brilliant picture as man could wish to see: but marred by two ugly elements. A mile away on the low northern cliff, marked with many a cross, was the lonely cholera cemetery, a remembrance of the fearful pestilence which a few years since swept away thousands of the people: and

above frowned that black giant, now asleep: but for how long?

In 1797 an eruption hurled out pumice, ashes, and sulphureous vapours. In the great crisis of 1812, indeed, the volcano was quiet, leaving the Souffrière of St. Vincent to do the work; but since then he has shown an ugly and uncertain humour. Smoke by day, and flame by night—or probably that light reflected from below which is often mistaken for flame in volcanic eruptions—have been seen again and again above the crater; and the awful earthquake of 1843 proves that his capacity for mischief is unabated. The whole island, indeed, is somewhat unsafe; for the hapless town of Point-à-Pitre, destroyed by that earthquake, stands not on the volcanic Basse Terre, but on the edge of the marine Grande Terre, near the southern mouth of the salt-water river. Heaven grant these good people of Guadaloupe a long respite; for they are said to deserve it, as far as human industry and enterprise goes. They have, as well, I understand, as the gentlemen of Martinique, discovered the worth of the "division of labour." Throughout the West Indies the planter is usually, not merely a sugar-grower, but a sugar-maker also. He requires, therefore, two capitals, and two intellects likewise, one for his cane-fields, the other for his "ingenio," engine-house, or sugar-works. But he does not gain thereby two profits. Having two things to do,

neither, usually, is done well. The cane-farming is bad, the sugar-making bad; and the sugar, when made, disposed of through merchants by a cumbrous, antiquated, and expensive system. These shrewd Frenchmen, and, I am told, even small proprietors among the Negros, not being crippled, happily for them, by those absurd sugar-duties which, till Mr. Lowe's budget, put a premium on the making of bad sugar, are confining themselves to growing the canes, and sell them raw to "Usines Centrales," at which they are manufactured into sugar. They thus devote their own capital and intellect to increasing the yield of their estates; while the central factories, it is said, pay dividends ranging from 20 to 40 per cent. I regretted much that I was unable to visit in crop-time one of these factories, and see the working of a system which seems to contain one of the best elements of the co-operative principle.

But (and this is at present a serious inconvenience to a traveller in the Antilles) the steamer passes each island only once a fortnight; so that to land in an island is equivalent to staying there at least that time, unless one chooses to take the chances of a coasting schooner, and bad food, bugs, cockroaches, and a bunk which—but I will not describe. "Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda" (down the companion) "e passa."

I must therefore content myself with describing, as honestly

as I can, what little we saw from the sea, of islands at each of which we would gladly have stayed several days.

As the traveller nears each of them—Guadaloupe, Dominica, Martinique—of which two last we had only one passing glance—St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Grenada—he will be impressed, not only by the peculiarity of their form, but by the richness of their colour.

All of them do not, like St. Kitts, Guadaloupe, and St. Vincent, slope up to one central peak. In Martinique, for instance, there are three separate peaks, or groups of peaks—the Mont Pelée, the Pitons du Carbet, and the Piton du Vauclain. But all have that peculiar jagged outline which is noticed first at the Virgin Islands.

Flat "vans" or hog-backed hills, and broad sweeps of moorland, so common in Scotland, are as rare as are steep walls of cliff, so common in the Alps. Pyramid is piled on pyramid, the sides of each at a slope of about 45°, till the whole range is a congeries of multitudinous peaks and peaklets, round the base of which spreads out, with a sudden sweep, the smooth lowland of volcanic ash and lava. This extreme raggedness of outline is easily explained. The mountains have never been, as in Scotland, planed smooth by ice. They have been gouged out, in every direction, by the furious tropic rains and tropic rain-torrents. Had the rocks been stratified and tolerably horizontal, these rains

would have cut them out into tablelands divided by deep gullies, such as may be seen in Abyssinia, and in certain parts of the western United States. But these rocks are altogether amorphous and unstratified, and have been poured or spouted out as lumps, dykes, and sheets of lava, of every degree of hardness; so that the rain, in degrading them, has worn them, not into tables and ranges, but into innumerable cones. And the process of degradation is still going on rapidly. Though a cliff, or sheet of bare rock, is hardly visible among the glens, yet here and there a bright brown patch tells of a recent landslip; and the masses of debris and banks of shingle, backed by a pestilential little swamp at the mouth of each torrent, show how furious must be the down-pour and down-roll before the force of a sudden flood, along so headlong an incline.

But in strange contrast with the ragged outline, and with the wild devastation of the rainy season, is the richness of the verdure which clothes the islands, up to their highest peaks, in what seems a coat of green fur; but when looked at through the glasses, proves to be, in most cases, gigantic timber. Not a rock is seen. If there be a cliff here and there, it is as green as an English lawn. Steep slopes are grey with groo-groo palms,[1] or yellow with unknown flowering trees. High against the sky-line, tiny knots and

[1] Acrocomia.

lumps are found to be gigantic trees. Each glen has buried its streamlet a hundred feet in vegetation, above which, here and there, the grey stem and dark crown of some palmiste towers up like the mast of some great admiral. The eye and the fancy strain vainly into the green abysses, and wander up and down over the wealth of depths and heights, compared with which European parks and woodlands are but paltry scrub and shaugh. No books are needed to tell that. The eye discovers it for itself, even before it has learnt to judge of the great size of the vegetation, from the endless variety of form and colour. For the islands, though green intensely, are not of one, but of every conceivable green, or rather of hues ranging from pale yellow through all greens into cobalt blue; and as the wind stirs the leaves, and sweeps the lights and shadows over hill and glen, all is ever-changing, iridescent, like a peacock's neck; till the whole island, from peak to shore, seems some glorious jewel—an emerald with tints of sapphire and topaz, hanging between blue sea and white surf below, and blue sky and white cloud above.

If the reader fancies that I exaggerate, let him go and see. Let him lie for one hour off the Rosseau at Dominica. Let him sail down the leeward side of Guadaloupe, down the leeward side of what island he will, and judge for himself how poor, and yet how tawdry, my words are, com-

pared with the luscious yet magnificent colouring of the Antilles.

The traveller, at least so I think, would remark also, with some surprise, the seeming smallness of these islands. The Basse Terre of Guadaloupe, for instance, is forty miles in length. As you lie off it, it does not look half, or even a quarter, of that length ; and that, not merely because the distances north and south are foreshortened, or shut in by nearer headlands. The causes, I believe, are more subtle and more complex. First, the novel clearness of the air, which makes the traveller, fresh from misty England, fancy every object far nearer, and therefore far smaller, than it actually is. Next the simplicity of form. Each outer line trends upward so surely toward a single focus; each whole is so sharply defined between its base-line of sea and its background of sky, that, like a statue, each island is compact and complete in itself, an isolated and self-dependent organism; and therefore, like every beautiful statue, it looks much smaller than it is. So perfect this isolation seems, that one fancies, at moments, that the island does not rise out of the sea, but floats upon it; that it is held in place, not by the roots of the mountains, and deep miles of lava-wall below, but by the cloud which has caught it by the top, and will not let it go. Let that cloud but rise, and vanish, and the whole beautiful thing will be cast adrift; ready to fetch way before the wind, and (as

it will seem often enough to do when viewed through a cabin-port) to slide silently past you, while you are sliding past it.

And yet, to him who knows the past, a dark shadow hangs over all this beauty; and the air—even in clearest blaze of sunshine—is full of ghosts. I do not speak of the shadow of Negro slavery, nor of the shadow which, though abolished, it has left behind, not to be cleared off for generations to come. I speak of the shadow of war, and the ghosts of gallant soldiers and sailors. Truly here

> "The spirits of our fathers
> Might start from every wave;
> For the deck it was their field of fame,
> And ocean was their grave,"

and ask us: What have you done with these islands, which we won for you with precious blood? What could we answer? We have misused them, neglected them; till now, ashamed of the slavery of the past, and too ignorant and helpless to govern them now slavery is gone, we are half-minded to throw them away again, or to allow them to annex themselves, in sheer weariness at our imbecility, to the Americans, who, far too wise to throw them away in their turn, will accept them gladly as an instalment of that great development of their empire, when "The stars and stripes shall float upon Cape Horn."

But was it for this that these islands were taken and re-taken, till every gully held the skeleton of an Englishman? Was it for this that these seas were reddened with blood year after year, till the sharks learnt to gather to a sea-fight, as eagle, kite, and wolf gathered of old to fights on land? Did all those gallant souls go down to Hades in vain, and leave nothing for the Englishman but the sad and proud memory of their useless valour? That at least they have left.

However we may deplore those old wars as unnecessary; however much we may hate war in itself, as perhaps the worst of all the superfluous curses with which man continues to deface himself and this fair earth of God, yet one must be less than Englishman, less, it may be, than man, if one does not feel a thrill of pride at entering waters where one says to oneself,—Here Rodney, on the glorious 12th of April, 1782, broke Count de Grasse's line (teaching thereby Nelson to do the same in like case), took and destroyed seven French ships of the line and scattered the rest, preventing the French fleet from joining the Spaniards at Hispaniola; thus saving Jamaica and the whole West Indies, and brought about by that single tremendous blow the honourable peace of 1783. On what a scene of crippled and sinking, shattered and triumphant ships, in what a sea, must the conquerors have looked round from the Formidable's poop, with De Grasse at luncheon with Rodney in the cabin below, and not, as he had boastfully

promised, on board his own Ville de Paris. Truly, though cynically, wrote Sir Gilbert Blane, "If superior beings make a sport of the quarrels of mortals, they could not have chosen a better theatre for this magnificent exhibition, nor could they ever have better entertainment than this day afforded."

Yon lovely roadstead of Dominica—there it was that Rodney first caught up the French on the 9th of April, three days before, and would have beaten them there and then, had not a great part of his fleet lain becalmed under these very highlands, past which we are steaming through water smooth as glass. You glance, again, running down the coast of Martinique, into a deep bay, ringed round with gay houses embowered in mango and cocoa-nut, with the Piton du Vauclain rising into the clouds behind it. That is the Cul-de-sac Royal, for years the rendezvous and stronghold of the French fleets. From it Count de Grasse sailed out on the fatal 8th of April; and there, beyond it, opens an isolated rock, of the shape, but double the size, of one of the great Pyramids, which was once the British sloop of war Diamond Rock.

For, in the end of 1803, Sir Samuel Hood saw that French ships passing to Fort Royal harbour in Martinique escaped him by running through the deep channel between Pointe du Diamante and this same rock, which rises sheer out of the water 600 feet, and is about a mile round, and only accessible at a point to the leeward, and even then only when there is no surf.

He who lands, it is said, has then to creep through crannies and dangerous steeps, round to the windward side, where the eye is suddenly relieved by a sloping grove of wild fig-trees, clinging by innumerable air-roots to the cracks of the stone.

So Hood, with that inspiration of genius so common then among sailors, laid his seventy-four, the Centaur, close alongside the Diamond; made a hawser, with a traveller on it, fast to the ship and to the top of the rock; and in January 1804 got three long 24's and two 18's hauled up far above his mast-head by sailors who, as they "hung like clusters," appeared "like mice hauling a little sausage. Scarcely could we hear the Governor on the top directing them with his trumpet; the Centaur lying close under, like a cocoa-nut shell, to which the hawsers are affixed."[1] In this strange fortress, Lieutenant James Wilkie Maurice (let his name be recollected as one of England's forgotten worthies), was established, with 120 men and boys, and ammunition, provisions, and water, for four months; and the rock was borne on the books of the Admiralty as His Majesty's ship Diamond Rock, and swept the seas with her guns till the 1st of June, 1805, when she had to surrender, for want of powder, to a French squadron of two 74's, a frigate, a corvette, a schooner, and eleven gunboats, after killing and wounding some seventy men on the rock alone, and destroying three gunboats, with a loss to

[1] "Naval Chronicles," vol. xii. p. 206.

herself of two men killed and one wounded. Remembering which story, who will blame the traveller if he takes off his hat to His Majesty's quondam corvette, as he sees for the first time its pink and yellow sides shining in the sun, above the sparkling seas over which it domineered of old? You run onwards toward St. Lucia. Across that channel Rodney's line of frigates watched for the expected reinforcement of the French fleet. The first bay in St. Lucia is Gros islet; and there is the Gros islet itself—Pigeon Rock, as the English call it—behind which Rodney's fleet lay waiting at anchor, while he himself sat on the top of the rock, day after day, spy-glass in hand, watching for the signals from his frigates that the French fleet was on the move.

And those glens and forests of St. Lucia—over them and through them Sir John Moore and Sir Ralph Abercrombie fought, week after week, month after month, not merely against French soldiers, but against worse enemies; "Brigands," as the poor fellows were called; Negros liberated by the Revolution of 1792. With their heads full (and who can blame them?) of the Rights of Man, and the democratic teachings of that valiant and able friend of Robespierre, Victor Hugues, they had destroyed their masters, man, woman, and child, horribly enough, and then helped to drive out of the island the invading English, who were already half destroyed, not with fighting, but with fever. And now "St. Lucia the

faithful," as the Convention had named her, was swarming with fresh English; and the remaining French and the drilled Negros made a desperate stand in the earthworks of yonder Morne Fortunée, above the harbour, and had to surrender, with 100 guns and all their stores; and then the poor black fellows, who only knew that they were free, and intended to remain free, took to the bush, and fed on the wild cush-cush roots and the plunder of the plantations, man-hunting, murdering French and English alike, and being put to death in return whenever caught. Gentle Abercrombie could not coax them into peace: stern Moore could not shoot and hang them into it; and the "Brigand war" dragged hideously on, till Moore—who was nearly caught by them in a six-oared boat off the Pitons, and had to row for his life to St. Vincent, so saving himself for the glory of Corunna—was all but dead of fever; and Colonel James Drummond had to carry on the miserable work, till the whole "Armée Française dans les bois" laid down their rusty muskets, on the one condition, that free they had been, and free they should remain. So they were formed into an English regiment, and sent to fight on the coast of Africa; and in more senses than one "went to their own place." Then St. Lucia was ours till the peace of 1802; then French again, under the good and wise Nogués; to be retaken by us in 1803 once and for all.

I tell this little story at some length, as an instance of what these islands have cost us in blood and treasure. I have heard it regretted that we restored Martinique to the French, and kept St. Lucia instead. But in so doing, the British Government acted at least on the advice which Rodney had given as early as the year 1778. St. Lucia, he held, would render Martinique and the other islands of little use in war, owing to its windward situation and its good harbours; for from St. Lucia every other British island might receive speedy succour. He advised that the Little Carenage should be made a permanent naval station, with dockyard and fortifications, and a town built there by Government, which would, in his opinion, have become a metropolis for the other islands. And indeed, Nature had done her part to make such a project easy of accomplishment. But Rodney's advice was not taken—any more than his advice to people the island, by having a considerable quantity of land in each parish allotted to ten-acre men (*i.e.* white yeomen), under penalty of forfeiting it to the Crown should it be ever converted to any other use than provision ground (*i.e.* thrown into sugar estates). This advice shows that Rodney's genius, though, with the prejudices of his time, he supported not only slavery, but the slave trade itself, had perceived one of the most fatal weaknesses of the slaveholding and sugar-growing system. And well it would have been for St. Lucia if his advice had been taken.

But neither ten-acre men nor dockyards were ever established in St. Lucia. The mail-steamers, if they need to go into dock, have, I am ashamed to say, to go to Martinique, where the French manage matters better. The admirable Carenage harbour is empty; Castries remains a little town, small, dirty, dilapidated, and unwholesome; and St. Lucia itself is hardly to be called a colony, but rather the nucleus of a colony, which may become hereafter, by energy and good government, a rich and thickly-peopled garden up to the very mountain-tops.

We went up eight hundred feet of steep hill, to pay a visit on that Morne Fortunée which Moore and Abercrombie took, with terrible loss of life, in May 1796; and wondered at the courage and the tenacity of purpose which could have contrived to invest, and much more to assault, such a stronghold, "dragging the guns across ravines and up the acclivities of the mountains and rocks," and then attacking the works only along one narrow neck of down, which must be fat, to this day, with English blood.

All was peaceful enough now. The forts were crumbling, the barracks empty, and the "neat cottages, smiling flower gardens, smooth grass-plats and gravel-walks," which were once the pride of the citadel, replaced for the most part with Guava-scrub and sensitive plants. But nothing can destroy the beauty of the panorama. To the north and east a wilderness

of mountain peaks; to the west the Grand Cul-de-sac and the Carenage, mapped out in sheets of blue between high promontories; and, beyond all, the open sea. What a land: and in what a climate: and all lying well-nigh as it has been since the making of the world, waiting for man to come and take possession. But there, as elsewhere, matters are mending steadily; and in another hundred years St. Lucia may be an honour to the English race.

We were, of course, anxious to obtain at St. Lucia specimens of that abominable reptile, the Fer-de-lance, or rat-tailed snake,[1] which is the pest of this island, as well as of the neighbouring island of Martinique, and, in Père Labat's time, of lesser Martinique in the Grenadines, from which, according to Davy, it seems to have disappeared. It occurs also in Guadaloupe. In great Martinique—so the French say—it is dangerous to travel through certain woodlands on account of the Fer-de-lance, who lies along a bough, and strikes, without provocation, at horse or man. I suspect this statement, however, to be an exaggeration. I was assured that this was not the case in St. Lucia; that the snake attacks no oftener than other venomous snakes,—that is, when trodden on, or when his retreat is cut off. At all events, it seems easy enough to kill him: so easy, that I hope yet it may be possible to catch

[1] Craspedocephalus lanceolatus.

him alive, and that the Zoological Gardens may at last possess—what they have long coveted in vain—the hideous attraction of a live Fer-de-lance. The specimens which we brought home are curious enough, even from this æsthetic point of view. Why are these poisonous snakes so repulsive in appearance, some of them at least, and that not in proportion to their dangerous properties? For no one who puts the mere dread out of his mind will call the Cobras ugly, even anything but beautiful; nor, again, the deadly Coral snake of Trinidad, whose beauty tempts children, and even grown people, to play with it, or make a necklace of it, sometimes to their own destruction. But who will call the Puff Adder of the Cape, or this very Fer-de-lance, anything but ugly and horrible: not only from the brutality signified, to us at least, by the flat triangular head and the heavy jaw, but by the look of malevolence and craft signified, to us at least, by the eye and the lip? "To us at least," I say. For it is an open question, and will be one, as long as the nominalist and the realist schools of thought keep up their controversy—which they will do to the world's end—whether this seeming hideousness be a real fact: whether we do not attribute to the snake the same passions which we should expect to find—and to abhor—in a human countenance of somewhat the same shape, and then justify our assumption to ourselves by the creature's bites, which are actually no

more the result of craft and malevolence than the bite of a frightened mouse or squirrel. I should be glad to believe that the latter theory were the true one; that nothing is created really ugly, that the Fer-de-lance looks an hideous fiend, the Ocelot a beautiful fiend, merely because the outlines of the Ocelot approach more nearly to those which we consider beautiful in a human being: but I confess myself not yet convinced. "There is a great deal of human nature in man," said the wise Yankee; and one's human nature, perhaps one's common-sense also, will persist in considering beauty and ugliness as absolute realities, in spite of one's efforts to be fair to the weighty arguments on the other side.

These Fer-de-lances, be that as it may, are a great pest in St. Lucia. Dr. Davy says that he "was told by the Lieutenant-Governor, that as many as thirty rat-tailed snakes were killed in clearing a piece of land, of no great extent, near Government House." I can well believe this, for about the same number were killed only two years ago in clearing, probably, the same piece of ground, which is infested with that creeping pest of the West Indies, the wild Guava-bush, from which guava-jelly is made. The present Lieutenant-Governor has offered a small reward for the head of every Fer-de-lance killed: and the number brought in, in the first month, was so large, that I do not like to quote it merely from memory. Certainly, it was high time to make a crusade against these

unwelcome denizens. Dr. Davy, judging from a Government report, says that nineteen persons were killed by them in one small parish in the year 1849; and the death, though by no means certain, is, when it befals, a hideous death enough. If any one wishes to know what it is like, let him read the tragedy which Sir Richard Schomburgk tells—with his usual brilliance and pathos, for he is a poet as well as a man of science—in his "Travels in British Guiana," vol. ii. p. 255—how the Craspedocephalus, coiled on a stone in the ford, let fourteen people walk over him without stirring, or allowing himself to be seen: and at last rose, and, missing Schomburgk himself, struck the beautiful Indian bride, the "Liebling der ganzen Gesellschaft;" and how she died in her bridegroom's arms, with horrors which I do not record.

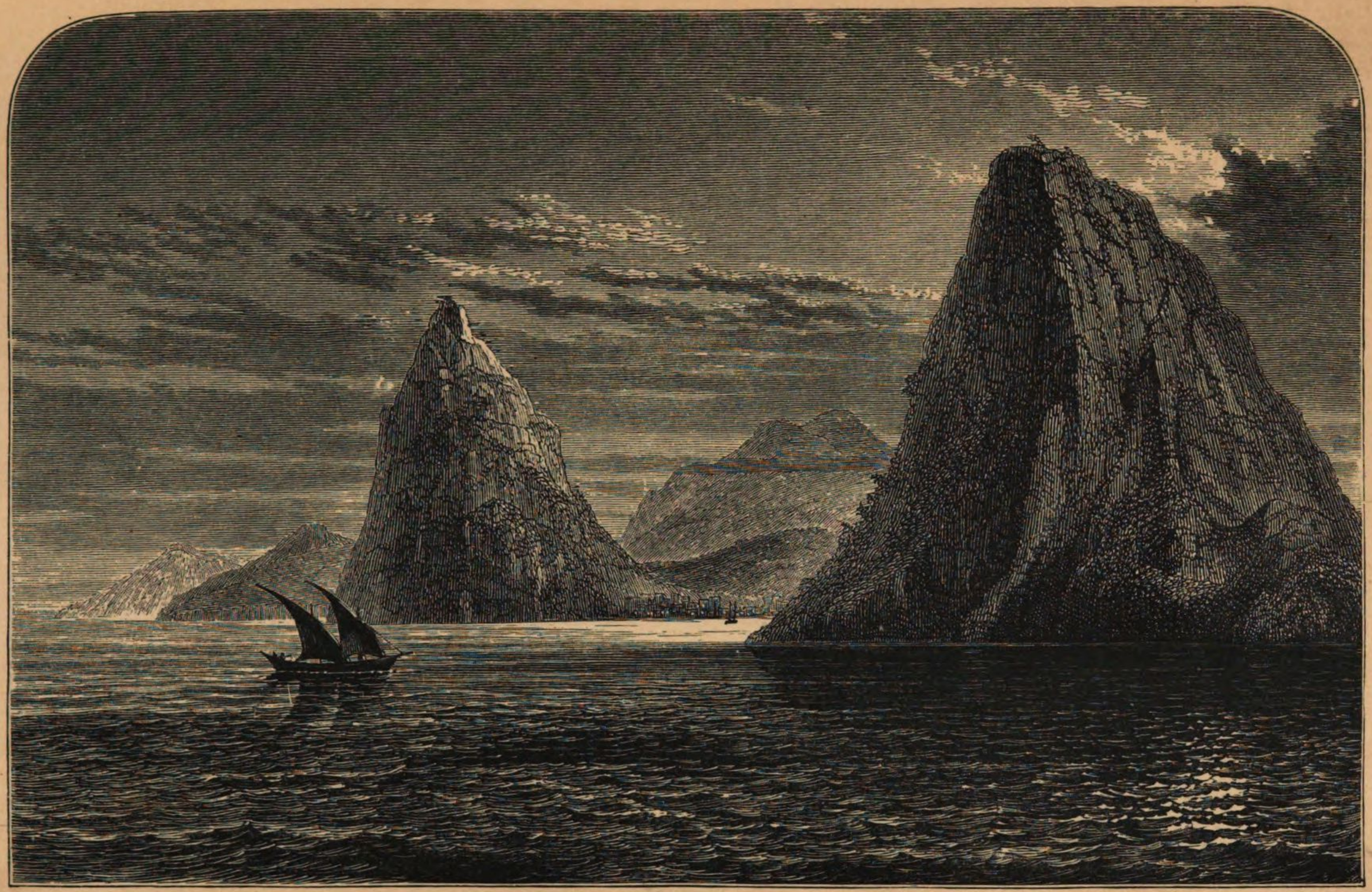
Strangely enough, this snake, so fatal to man, has no power against another West Indian snake, almost equally common, namely, the Cribo.[1] This brave animal, closely connected with our common water-snake, is perfectly harmless, and a welcome guest in West Indian houses, because he clears them of rats. He is some six or eight feet long, black, with more or less bright yellow about the tail and under the stomach. He not only faces the Fer-de-lance, who is often as big as he, but kills and eats him. It was but last year, I

[1] Coluber variabilis.

think, that the population of Carenage turned out to see a fight in a tree between a Cribo and a Fer-de-lance, of about equal size, which, after a two hours' struggle, ended in the Cribo swallowing the Fer-de-lance, head foremost. But when he had got his adversary about one-third down, the Creoles—just as so many Englishmen would have done—seeing that all the sport was over, rewarded the brave Cribo by killing both, and preserving them as a curiosity in spirits. How the Fer-de-lance came into the Antilles is a puzzle. The black American scorpion—whose bite is more dreaded by the Negros than even the snake's—may have been easily brought by ship in luggage or in cargo. But the Fer-de-lance, whose nearest home is in Guiana, is not likely to have come on board ship. It is difficult to believe that he travelled northward by land at the epoch—if such a one there ever was—when these islands were joined to South America: for if so, he would surely be found in St. Vincent, in Grenada, and most surely of all in Trinidad. So far from that being the case, he will not live, it is said, in St. Vincent. For (so goes the story) during the Carib war of 1795-6, the savages imported Fer-de-lances from St. Lucia or Martinique, and turned them loose, in hopes of their destroying the white men: but they did not breed, dwindled away, and were soon extinct. It is possible that they, or their eggs, came in floating timber from the Orinoco: but if so, how is it that they have

never been stranded on the east coast of Trinidad, whither timber without end drifts from that river? In a word, I have no explanation whatsoever to give; as I am not minded to fall back on the mediæval one, that the devil must have brought them thither, to plague the inhabitants for their sins.

Among all these beautiful islands, St. Lucia is, I think, the most beautiful; not indeed on account of the size or form of its central mass, which is surpassed by that of several others, but on account of those two extraordinary mountains at its south-western end, which, while all conical hills in the French islands are called Pitons, bear the name of The Pitons par excellence. From most elevated points in the island their twin peaks may be seen jutting up over the other hills, like, according to irreverent English sailors, the tips of a donkey's ears. But, as the steamer runs southward along the shore, these two peaks open out, and you find yourself in deep water close to the base of two obelisks, rather than mountains, which rise sheer out of the sea, one to the height of 2,710, the other to that of 2,680 feet, about a mile from each other. Between them is the loveliest little bay; and behind them green wooded slopes rise toward the rearward mountain of the Souffrière. The whole glitters clear and keen in blazing sunshine: but behind, black depths of cloud and grey sheets of rain shroud all the central highlands in mystery and sadness.



Pitons of St. Lucia.

Beyond them, without a shore, spreads open sea. But the fantastic grandeur of the place cannot be described in words. The pencil of the artist must be trusted. I can vouch that he has not in the least exaggerated the slenderness and steepness of the rock-masses. One of them, it is said, has never been climbed; unless a myth which hangs about it is true. Certain English sailors, probably of Rodney's men—and numbering, according to the pleasure of the narrator, three hundred, thirty, or three—are said to have warped themselves up it by lianes and scrub: but they found the rock-ledges garrisoned by an enemy more terrible than any French. Beneath the bites of the Fer-de-lances, and it may be beneath the blaze of the sun, man after man dropped; and lay, or rolled down the cliffs. A single survivor was seen to reach the summit, to wave the union-jack in triumph over his head, and then to fall a corpse. So runs the tale, which, if not true, has yet its value, as a token of what, in those old days, English sailors were believed capable of daring and of doing.

At the back of these two Pitons is the Souffrière, probably the remains of the old crater, now fallen in, and only 1,000 feet above the sea: a golden egg to the islanders, were it but used. In case of war, and any difficulty occurring in obtaining sulphur from Sicily, a supply of the article to almost any amount might be obtained from this and the

other like Solfaterras of the British Antilles; they being, so long as the natural distillation of the substance continues active as at present, inexhaustible. But to work them profitably will require a little more common-sense than the good folks of St. Lucia have as yet shown. In 1836, two gentlemen of Antigua,[1] Mr. Bennett and Mr. Wood, set up sulphur works at the Souffrière of St. Lucia, and began prosperously enough, exporting 540 tons the first year. "But, in 1840," says Mr. Breen, "the sugar-growers took the alarm," fearing, it is to be presumed, that labour would be diverted from the cane-estates, "and at their instigation the Legislative Council imposed a tax of 16*s.* sterling on every ton of purified sulphur exported from the colony." The consequence was that "Messrs. Bennett and Wood, after incurring a heavy loss of time and treasure, had to break up their establishment and retire from the colony." One has heard of the man who killed the goose to get the golden egg. In this case the goose, to avoid the trouble of laying, seems to have killed the man.

The next link in the chain, as the steamer runs southward, is St. Vincent; a single volcano peak, like St. Kitts, or the Basse Terre of Guadaloupe. Very grand are the vast sheets, probably of lava covered with ash, which pour down from between two rounded mountains just above the town. Rich with green canes, they contrast strongly with the brown

[1] Breen's "St. Lucia," p. 295.

ragged cliffs right and left of them, and still more with the awful depths beyond and above, where, underneath a canopy of bright white clouds, scowls a purple darkness of cliffs and glens, among which lies, unseen, the Souffrière.

In vain, both going and coming, by sunlight, and again by moonlight, when the cane-fields gleamed white below and the hills were pitch-black above, did we try to catch a sight of this crater-peak. One fact alone we ascertained, that like all, as far as I have seen, of the West Indian volcanoes, it does not terminate in an ash-cone, but in ragged cliffs of blasted rock. The explosion of April 27, 1812, must have been too violent, and too short, to allow of any accumulation round the crater. And no wonder; for that single explosion relieved an interior pressure upon the crust of the earth, which had agitated sea and land from the Azores to the West Indian islands, the coasts of Venezuela, the Cordillera of New Grenada, and the valleys of the Mississippi and Ohio. For nearly two years the earthquakes had continued, when they culminated in one great tragedy, which should be read at length in the pages of Humboldt.[1] On March 26, 1812, when the people of Caraccas were assembled in the churches, beneath a still and blazing sky, one minute of earthquake sufficed to bury, amid the ruins of churches and houses, nearly 10,000 souls. The same earthquake wrought terrible destruction along

[1] Personal Narrative, book v. cap. 14.

the whole line of the northern Cordilleras, and was felt even at Santa Fé de Bogota, and Honda, 180 leagues from Caraccas. But the end was not yet. While the wretched survivors of Caraccas were dying of fever and starvation, and wandering inland to escape from ever-renewed earthquake shocks, among villages and farms, which, ruined like their own city, could give them no shelter, the almost forgotten volcano of St. Vincent was muttering in suppressed wrath. It had thrown out no lava since 1718; if, at least, the eruption spoken of by Moreau de Jonnés took place in the Souffrière. According to him, with a terrific earthquake, clouds of ashes were driven into the air with violent detonations from a mountain situated at the eastern end of the island. When the eruption had ceased, it was found that the whole mountain had disappeared. Now there is no eastern end to St. Vincent, nor any mountain on the east coast; and the Souffrière is at the northern end. It is impossible, meanwhile, that the wreck of such a mountain should not have left traces visible and notorious to this day. May not the truth be, that the Souffrière had once a lofty cone, which was blasted away in 1718, leaving the present crater-ring of cliffs and peaks; and that thus may be explained the discrepancies in the accounts of its height, which Mr. Scrope gives as 4,940 feet, and Humboldt and Dr. Davy at 3,000, a measurement which seems to me to be more probably correct? The moun-

tain is said to have been slightly active in 1785. In 1812, its old crater had been for some years (and is now) a deep blue lake, with walls of rock around 800 feet in height, reminding one traveller of the Lake of Albano.[1] But for twelve months it had given warning, by frequent earthquake shocks, that it had its part to play in the great subterranean battle between rock and steam; and on the 27th of April, 1812, the battle began.

A negro boy—he is said to be still alive in St. Vincent—was herding cattle on the mountain side. A stone fell near him; and then another. He fancied that other boys were pelting him from the cliffs above, and began throwing stones in return. But the stones fell thicker: and among them one, and then another, too large to have been thrown by human hand. And the poor little fellow woke up to the fact that not a boy, but the mountain, was throwing stones at him; and that the column of black cloud which was rising from the crater above was not harmless vapour, but dust, and ash, and stone. He turned, and ran for his life, leaving the cattle to their fate, while the steam mitrailleuse of the Titans—to which all man's engines of destruction are but pop-guns—roared on for three days and nights, covering the greater part of the island in ashes, burying crops, breaking branches off the trees, and spreading ruin from which several estates never

[1] Dr. Davy.

recovered; and so the 30th of April dawned in darkness which might be felt.

Meanwhile, on that same day, to change the scene of the campaign two hundred and ten leagues, "a distance," as Humboldt says, "equal to that between Vesuvius and Paris," "the inhabitants, not only of Caraccas, but of Calabozo, situate in the midst of the Llanos, over a space of four thousand square leagues, were terrified by a subterranean noise, which resembled frequent discharges of the loudest cannon. It was accompanied by no shock: and, what is very remarkable, was as loud on the coast as at eighty leagues' distance inland; and at Caraccas, as well as at Calabozo, preparations were made to put the place in defence against an enemy who seemed to be advancing with heavy artillery." They might as well have copied the St. Vincent herd-boy, and thrown their stones, too, at the Titans; for the noise was, there can be no doubt, nothing else than the final explosion in St. Vincent far away. The same explosion was heard in Venezuela, the same at Martinique and Guadaloupe: but there, too, there were no earthquake shocks. The volcanoes of the two French islands lay quiet, and left their English brother to do the work. On the same day, a stream of lava rushed down from the mountain, reached the sea in four hours, and then all was over. The earthquakes which had shaken for two years a sheet of the earth's surface larger

than half Europe, were stilled by the eruption of this single vent.

No wonder if, with such facts on my memory since my childhood, I looked up at that Souffrière with awe, as at a giant, obedient though clumsy, beneficent though terrible, reposing aloft among the clouds when his appointed work was done.

The strangest fact about this eruption was, that the mountain did not make use of its old crater. The original vent must have become so jammed and consolidated, in the few years between 1785 and 1812, that it could not be re-opened, even by a steam-force the vastness of which may be guessed at from the vastness of the area which it had shaken for two years. So when the eruption was over, it was found that the old crater-lake, incredible as it may seem, remained undisturbed, as far as has been ascertained. But close to it, and separated only by a knife-edge of rock some 700 feet in height, and so narrow that, as I was assured by one who had seen it, it is dangerous to crawl along it, a second crater, nearly as large as the first, had been blasted out, the bottom of which, in like manner, is now filled with water. I regretted much that I could not visit it. Three points I longed to ascertain carefully—the relative heights of the water in the two craters; the height and nature of the spot where the lava stream issued; and lastly, if

possible, the actual causes of the locally famous Rabacca, or "Dry River," one of the largest streams in the island, which was swallowed up during the eruption, at a short distance from its source, leaving its bed an arid gully to this day. But it could not be, and I owe what little I know of the summit of the Souffrière principally to a most intelligent and gentleman-like young Wesleyan minister, whose name has escaped me. He described vividly, as we stood together on the deck, looking up at the volcano, the awful beauty of the twin lakes, and of the clouds which, for months together, whirl in and out of the cups in fantastic shapes before the eddies of the trade-wind.

The day after the explosion, "Black Sunday," gave a proof of, though no measure of, the enormous force which had been exerted. Eighty miles to windward lies Barbados. All Saturday a heavy cannonading had been heard to the eastward. The English and French fleets were surely engaged. The soldiers were called out; the batteries manned: but the cannonade died away, and all went to bed in wonder. On the 1st of May the clocks struck six: but the sun did not, as usual in the tropics, answer to the call. The darkness was still intense, and grew more intense as the morning wore on. A slow and silent rain of impalpable dust was falling over the whole island. The Negros rushed shrieking into the streets. Surely the last day was come. The white folk caught (and little blame to them) the panic; and some began

to pray who had not prayed for years. The pious and the educated (and there were plenty of both in Barbados) were not proof against the infection. Old letters describe the scene in the churches that morning as hideous—prayers, sobs, and cries, in Stygian darkness, from trembling crowds. And still the darkness continued, and the dust fell.

I have a letter, written by one long since dead, who had at least powers of description of no common order, telling how, when he tried to go out of his house upon the east coast, he could not find the trees on his own lawn, save by feeling for their stems. He stood amazed not only in utter darkness, but in utter silence. For the trade-wind had fallen dead; the everlasting roar of the surf was gone; and the only noise was the crashing of branches, snapped by the weight of the clammy dust. He went in again, and waited. About one o'clock the veil began to lift; a lurid sunlight stared in from the horizon: but all was black overhead. Gradually the dust-cloud drifted away; the island saw the sun once more; and saw itself inches deep in black, and in this case fertilizing, dust. The trade-wind blew suddenly once more out of the clear east, and the surf roared again along the shore.

Meanwhile, a heavy earthquake-wave had struck part at least of the shores of Barbados. The gentleman on the east coast, going out, found traces of the sea, and boats and logs washed up, some 10 to 20 feet above high-tide mark: a

convulsion which seems to have gone unmarked during the general dismay.

One man at least, an old friend of John Hunter, Sir Joseph Banks, and others their compeers, was above the dismay, and the superstitious panic which accompanied it. Finding it still dark when he rose to dress, he opened (so the story used to run) his window; found it stick, and felt upon the sill a coat of soft powder. "The volcano in St. Vincent has broken out at last," said the wise man, "and this is the dust of it." So he quieted his household and his Negros, lighted his candles, and went to his scientific books, in that delight, mingled with an awe not the less deep because it is rational and self-possessed, with which he, like other men of science, looked at the wonders of this wondrous world.

Those who will recollect that Barbados is eighty miles to windward of St. Vincent, and that a strong breeze from E.N.E. is usually blowing from the former island to the latter, will be able to imagine, not to measure, the force of an explosion which must have blown this dust several miles into the air, above the region of the trade-wind, whether into a totally calm stratum, or into that still higher one in which the heated south-west wind is hurrying continually from the tropics toward the pole. As for the cessation of the trade-wind itself during the fall of the dust, I leave the fact to be ex-

plained by more learned men: the authority whom I have quoted leaves no doubt in my mind as to the fact.

On leaving St. Vincent, the track lies past the Grenadines. For sixty miles, long low islands of quaint forms and euphonious names—Becquia, Mustique, Canonau, Carriacou, Isle de Rhone—rise a few hundred feet out of the unfathomable sea, bare of wood, edged with cliffs and streaks of red and grey rock, resembling, says Dr. Davy, the Cyclades of the Grecian Archipelago: their number is counted at three hundred. The largest of them all is not 8,000 acres in extent; the smallest about 600. A quiet prosperous race of little yeomen, beside a few planters, dwell there; the latter feeding and exporting much stock, the former much provisions, and both troubling themselves less than of yore with sugar and cotton. They build coasting vessels, and trade with them to the larger islands; and they might be, it is said, if they chose, much richer than they are,—if that be any good to them.

The steamer does not stop at any of these little sea-hermitages; so that we could only watch their shores: and they were worth watching. They had been, plainly, sea-gnawn for countless ages; and may, at some remote time, have been all joined in one long ragged chine of hills, the highest about 1,000 feet. They seem to be for the most part made up of marls and limestones, with trap-dykes and other igneous matters here and there. And one could not help entertaining

the fancy that they were a specimen of what the other islands were once, or at least would have been now, had not each of them had its volcanic vents, to pile up hard lavas thousands of feet aloft, above the marine strata, and so consolidate each ragged chine of submerged mountain into one solid conical island, like St. Vincent at their northern end, and at their southern end that beautiful Grenada to which we were fast approaching, and which we reached, on our outward voyage, at nightfall; running in toward a narrow gap of moonlit cliffs, beyond which we could discern the lights of a town. We did not enter the harbour: but lay close off its gateway in safe deep water; fired our gun, and waited for the swarm of negro boats, which began to splash out to us through the darkness, the jabbering of their crews heard long before the flash of their oars was seen.

Most weird and fantastic are these nightly visits to West Indian harbours. Above, the black mountain-depths, with their canopy of cloud, bright white against the purple night, hung with keen stars. The moon, it may be on her back in the west, sinking like a golden goblet behind some rock-fort, half shrouded in black trees. Below, a line of bright mist over a swamp, with the coco-palms standing up through it, dark, and yet glistering in the moon. A light here and there in a house: another here and there in a vessel, unseen in the dark. The echo of the gun from hill to

hill. Wild voices from shore and sea. The snorting of the steamer, the rattling of the chain through the hawse-hole; and on deck, and under the quarter, strange gleams of red light amid pitchy darkness, from engines, galley fires, lanthorns; and black folk and white folk flitting restlessly across them.

The strangest show: "like a thing in a play," says every one when they see it for the first time. And when at the gun-fire one tumbles out of one's berth, and up on deck, to see the new island, one has need to rub one's eyes, and pinch oneself—as I was minded to do again and again during the next few weeks—to make sure that it is not all a dream. It is always worth the trouble, meanwhile, to tumble up on deck, not merely for the show, but for the episodes of West Indian life and manners, which, quaint enough by day, are sure to be even more quaint at night, in the confusion and bustle of the darkness. One such I witnessed in that same harbour of Grenada, not easily to be forgotten.

A tall and very handsome middle-aged brown woman, in a limp print gown and a gorgeous turban, stood at the gangway in a glare of light, which made her look like some splendid witch by a Walpurgis night-fire. "Tell your boatman to go round to the other side," quoth the officer in charge.

"Fanqua! (François) You go round oder side of de ship!"

Fanqua, who seemed to be her son, being sleepy, tipsy, stupid, or lazy, did not stir.

"Fanqua! You hear what de officer say? You go round."

No move.

"Fanqua! You not ashamed of youself? You not hear de officer say he turn a steam-pipe over you?"

No move.

"Fanqua!" (authoritative.)

"Fanqua!" (indignant.)

"Fanqua!" (argumentative.)

"Fanqua!" (astonished.)

"Fanqua!" (majestic.)

"Fanqua!" (confidentially alluring.)

"Fanqua!" (regretful.)

And so on, through every conceivable tone of expression.

But Fanqua did not move; and the officer and bystanders laughed.

She summoned all her talents, and uttered one last "Fanqua!" which was a triumph of art.

Shame and surprise were blended in her voice with tenderness and pity, and they again with meek despair. To have been betrayed, disgraced, and so unexpectedly, by one whom she loved, and must love still, in spite of this, his fearful fall!—It was more than heart could bear. Breathing his name but that once more, she stood a moment, like a queen of tragedy,

one long arm drawing her garments round her, the other outstretched, as if to cast off—had she the heart to do it—the rebel; and then stalked away into the darkness of the paddle-boxes—for ever and a day to brood speechless over her great sorrow? Not in the least. To begin chattering away to her acquaintances, as if no Fanqua existed in the world.

It was a piece of admirable play-acting; and was meant to be. She had been conscious all the while that she was an object of attention—possibly of admiration—to a group of men; and she knew what was right to be done and said under the circumstances, and did it perfectly, even to the smallest change of voice. She was, doubtless, quite sincere the whole time, and felt everything which her voice expressed: but she felt it, because it was proper to feel it; and deceived herself probably more than she deceived any one about her.

A curious phase of human nature is that same play-acting, effect-studying, temperament, which ends, if indulged in too much, in hopeless self-deception, and "the hypocrisy which," as Mr. Carlyle says, "is honestly indignant that you should think it hypocritical." It is common enough among Negresses, and among coloured people too: but is it so very uncommon among whites? Is it not the bane of too many Irish? of too many modern French? of certain English, for that matter, whom I have known, who probably had no drop of French or Irish blood in their veins? But it is all the more baneful the

higher the organization is; because, the more brilliant the intellect, the more noble the instincts, the more able its victim is to say—"See: I feel what I ought, I say what I ought, I do what I ought: and what more would you have? Why do you Philistines persist in regarding me with distrust and ridicule? What is this common honesty, and what is this 'single eye,' which you suspect me of not possessing?"

Very beautiful was that harbour of George Town, seen by day. In the centre an entrance some two hundred yards across: on the right, a cliff of volcanic sand, interspersed with large boulders hurled from some volcano now silent, where black women, with baskets on their heads, were filling a barge with gravel. On the left, rocks of hard lava, surmounted by a well-lined old fort, strong enough in the days of 32-pounders. Beyond it, still on the left, the little city, scrambling up the hillside, with its red roofs and church spires, among cocoa-nut and bread-fruit trees, looking just like a German toy town. In front, at the bottom of the harbour, villa over villa, garden over garden, up to the large and handsome Government House, one of the most delectable spots of all this delectable land; and piled above it, green hill upon green hill, which, the eye soon discovers, are the Sommas of old craters, one inside the other towards the central peak of Mount Maitland, 1,700 feet high. On the right bow, low sharp cliff-points of volcanic ash; and on the right again, a circular lake,

a quarter of a mile across and 40 feet in depth, with a coral reef, almost awash, stretching from it to the ash-cliff on the south side of the harbour mouth. A glance shows that this is none other than an old crater, like that inside English Harbour in Antigua, probably that which has hurled out the boulders and the ash; and one whose temper is still uncertain, and to be watched anxiously in earthquake times. The Etang du Vieux Bourg is its name; for, so tradition tells, in the beginning of the seventeenth century the old French town stood where the white coral-reef gleams under water; in fact, upon the northern lip of the crater. One day, however, the Enceladus below turned over in his sleep, and the whole town was swallowed up, or washed away. The sole survivor was a certain blacksmith, who thereupon was made—or as sole survivor made himself—Governor of the island of Grenada. So runs the tale; and so it seemed likely to run again, during the late earthquake at St. Thomas's. For on the very same day, and before any earthquake-wave from St. Thomas's had reached Grenada—if any ever reached it, which I could not clearly ascertain—this Etang du Vieux Bourg boiled up suddenly, hurling masses of water into the lower part of the town, washing away a stage, and doing much damage. The people were, and with good reason, in much anxiety for some hours after: but the little fit of ill-temper went off, having vented itself, as is well known, in

the sea between St. Thomas's and Santa Cruz, many miles away.

The bottom of the crater, I was assured, was not permanently altered: but the same informant—an eye-witness on whom I can fully depend—shared the popular opinion that it had opened, sucked in sea-water, and spouted it out again. If so, the good folks of George Town are quite right in holding that they had a very narrow escape of utter destruction.

An animated and picturesque spot, as the steamer runs alongside, is the wooden wharf where passengers are to land and the ship to coal. The coaling Negros and Negresses, dressed or undressed, in their dingiest rags, contrast with the country Negresses, in gaudy prints and gaudier turbans, who carry on their heads baskets of fruit even more gaudy than their dresses. Both country and town Negros, meanwhile, look—as they are said to be—comfortable and prosperous; and I can well believe the story that beggars are unknown in the island. The coalers, indeed, are only too well off, for they earn enough, by one day of violent and degrading toil, to live in reckless shiftless comfort, and, I am assured, something very like debauchery, till the next steamer comes in.

No sooner is the plank down, than a struggling line getting on board meets a struggling line getting on shore; and it is well if the passenger, on landing, is not besmirched with coal-dust, after a narrow escape of being shoved into the sea off

the stage. But, after all, civility pays in Grenada, as in the rest of the world; and the Negro, like the Frenchman, though surly and rude enough if treated with the least haughtiness, will generally, like the Frenchman, melt at once at a touch of the hat, and an appeal to "Laissez passer Mademoiselle." On shore we got, through be-coaled Negros, men and women, safe, and not very much be-coaled ourselves; and were driven up steep streets of black porous lava, between lava houses and walls, and past lava gardens, in which jutted up everywhere, amid the loveliest vegetation, black knots and lumps scorched by the nether fires.

The situation of the house—the principal one of the island—to which we drove, is beautiful beyond description. It stands on a knoll some 300 feet in height, commanded only by a slight rise to the north; and the wind of the eastern mountains sweeps fresh and cool through a wide hall and lofty rooms. Outside, a pleasure-ground and garden, with the same flowers as we plant out in summer at home; and behind tier on tier of green wooded hill, with cottages and farms in the hollows, might have made us fancy ourselves for a moment in some charming country-house in Wales. But opposite the drawing-room window rose a Candelabra Cereus, thirty feet high. On the lawn in front great shrubs of red Frangipani carried rose-coloured flowers which filled the air with fragrance, at the end of thick and all but leafless branches.

Trees hung over them with smooth greasy stems of bright copper—which has gained them the name of "Indian skin," at least in Trinidad, where we often saw them wild; another glance showed us that every tree and shrub around was different from those at home: and we recollected where we were; and recollected, too, as we looked at the wealth of flower and fruit and verdure, that it was sharp winter at home. We admired this and that: especially a most lovely Convolvulus—I know not whether we have it in our hot-houses[1]—with purple maroon flowers; and an old hog-plum[2]—Mombin of the French—a huge tree, which was striking, not so much from its size as from its shape. Growing among blocks on lava, it had assumed the exact shape of an English oak in a poor soil and exposed situation; globular-headed, gnarled, stunted, and most unlike to its giant brethren of the primeval woods, which range upward 60 or 80 feet without a branch. We walked up to see the old fort, commanding the harbour from a height of 800 feet. We sat and rested by the road-side under a great cottonwood-tree, and looked down on gorges of richest green, on Negro gardens, and groo-groo palms, and here and there a cabbage-palm, or a huge tree at whose name we could not guess; then turned through an arch cut in the rock into the interior of the fort, which now holds neither guns nor soldiers, to see at our feet

[1] Ipomœa Horsfallii. [2] Spondias lutea.

the triple harbour, the steep town, and a very paradise of garden and orchard; and then down again, with the regretful thought, which haunted me throughout the islands—What might the West Indies not have been by now, had it not been for slavery, rum, and sugar?

We got down to the steamer again just in time, happily, not to see a great fight in the water between two Negros; to watch which all the women had stopped their work, and cheered the combatants with savage shouts and laughter. At last the coaling and the cursing were over; and we steamed out again to sea.

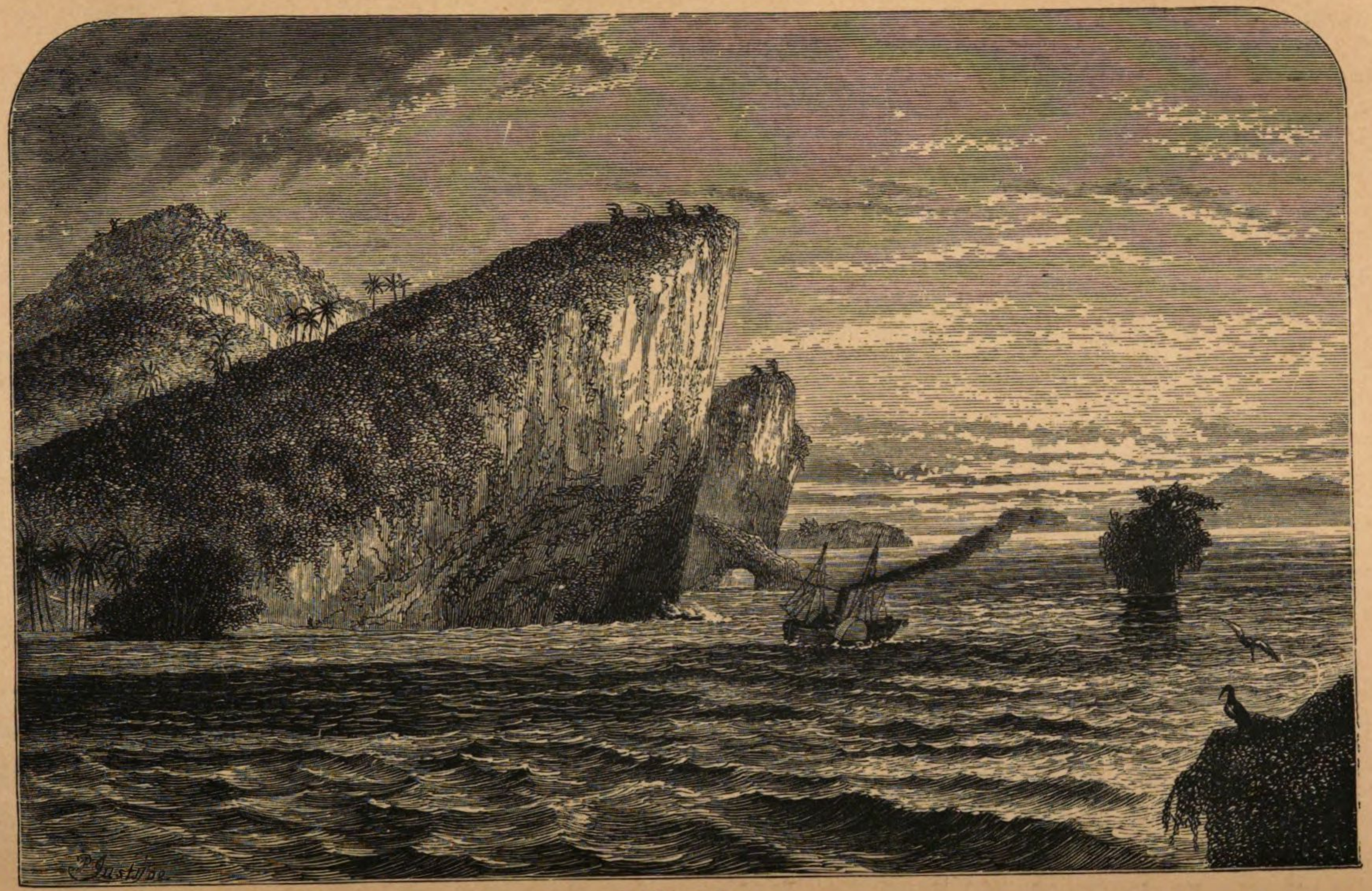
I have antedated this little episode—delightful for more reasons than I set down here—because I do not wish to trouble my readers with two descriptions of the same island—and those mere passing glimpses.

There are two craters, I should say, in Grenada, beside the harbour. One, the Grand Etang, lies high in the central group of mountains, which rise to 3,700 feet, and is itself about 1,740 feet above the sea. Dr. Davy describes it as a lake of great beauty, surrounded by bamboos and tree-ferns. The other crater-lake lies on the north-east coast, and nearer to the sea-level: and I more than suspect that more would be recognized, up and down the island, by the eye of a practised geologist.

The southern end of Grenada—of whatsoever rock it may

be composed—shows evidence of the same wave-destruction as do the Grenadines. Arches and stacks, and low horizontal strata laid bare along the cliff, in some places white with guano, prove that the sea has been at work for ages, which must be many and long, considering that the surf, on that leeward side of the island, is little or none the whole year round. With these low cliffs, in strongest contrast to the stately and precipitous southern point of St. Lucia, the southern point of Grenada slides into the sea, the last of the true Antilles. For Tobago, Robinson Crusoe's island, which lies away unseen to windward, is seemingly a fragment of South America, like the island of Trinidad, to which the steamer now ran dead south for seventy miles.

It was on the shortest day of the year—St. Thomas's-day—at seven in the morning (half-past eleven of English time, just as the old women at Eversley would have been going round the parish for their "goodying"), that we became aware of the blue mountains of North Trinidad ahead of us; to the west of them the island of the Dragon's Mouth; and westward again, a cloud among the clouds, the last spur of the Cordilleras of the Spanish Main. There was South America at last; and as a witness that this, too, was no dream, the blue water of the Windward Islands changed suddenly into foul bottle-green. The waters of the Orinoco, waters from the peaks of the Andes far away, were staining the sea around



The Monos Boca.

us. With thoughts full of three great names, connected, as long as civilized man shall remain, with those waters—Columbus, Raleigh, Humboldt—we steamed on, to see hills not standing out, like those of the isles which we had passed, in intense clearness of green and yellow, purple and blue, but all shrouded in haze, like those of the Hebrides or the West of Ireland. Onward through a narrow channel in the mountain-wall, not a rifle-shot across, which goes by the name of the Ape's Mouth, banked by high cliffs of dark Silurian rock—not bare, though, as in Britain, but furred with timber, festooned with lianes, down to the very spray of the gnawing surf. One little stack of rocks, not thirty feet high, and as many broad, stood almost in the midst of the channel, and in the very northern mouth of it, exposed to the full cut of surf and trade wind. But the plants on it, even seen through the glasses, told us where we were. One huge low tree covered the top with shining foliage, like that of a Portugal laurel; all around it upright Cerei reared their grey candelabra, and below them, hanging down the rock to the very surf, deep green night-blowing Cereus twined and waved, looking just like a curtain of gigantic stag's-horn moss. We ran through the channel; then amid more low wooded islands, it may be for a mile, before a strong back current rushing in from the sea; and then saw before us a vast plain of muddy water.

No shore was visible to the westward; to the eastward the northern hills of Trinidad, forest clad, sank to the water; to the south lay a long line of coast, generally level with the water's edge, and green with mangroves, or dotted with coco-palms. That was the Gulf of Paria, and Trinidad beyond.

Shipping at anchor, and buildings along the flat shore, marked Port of Spain, destined hereafter to stand, not on the sea-side, but, like Lynn in Norfolk, and other fen-land towns, in the midst of some of the richest reclaimed alluvial in the world.

As the steamer stopped at last, her screw whirled up from the bottom clouds of yellow mud, the mingled deposits of the Caroni and the Orinoco. In half an hour more we were on shore, amid Negros, Coolies, Chinese, French, Spaniards, short-legged Guaraon dogs, and black vultures.

CHAPTER III.

TRINIDAD.

It may be worth while to spend a few pages in telling something of the history of this lovely island since the 31st of July, 1499, when Columbus, on his third voyage, sighted the three hills in the south-eastern part. He had determined, it is said, to name the first land which he should see after the Blessed Trinity; the triple peaks seemed to him a heaven-sent confirmation of his intent, and he named the island Trinidad: but the Indians called it Iere.

He ran from Punta Galera, at the north-eastern extremity —so named from the likeness of a certain rock to a galley under sail—along the east and south of the island; turned eastward at Punta Galeota; and then northward, round Punta Icacque, through the Boca Sierpe, or serpent's mouth, into the Gulf of Paria, which he named "Golfo de Balena," the Gulf of the Whale, and "Golfo Triste," the Sad Gulf; and went out by the northern passage of the Boca Drago.

The names which he gave to the island and its surroundings remain, with few alterations, to this day.

He was surprised, says Washington Irving, at the verdure and fertility of the country, having expected to find it more parched and sterile as he approached the equator; whereas he beheld groves of palm-trees, and luxuriant forests sweeping down to the sea-side, with fountains and running streams beneath the shade. The shore was low and uninhabited: but the country rose in the interior, and was cultivated in many places, and enlivened by hamlets and scattered habitations. In a word, the softness and purity of the climate, and the verdure, freshness, and sweetness of the country, appeared to equal the delights of early spring in the beautiful province of Valencia in Spain.

He found the island peopled by a race of Indians with fairer complexions than any he had hitherto seen; "people all of good stature, well made, and of very graceful bearing, with much and smooth hair." They wore, the chiefs at least, tunics of coloured cotton, and on their heads beautiful worked handkerchiefs, which looked in the distance as if they were made of silk. The women, meanwhile, according to the report of Columbus' son, seem, some of them at least, to have gone utterly without clothing.

They carried square bucklers, the first Columbus had seen in the New World; and bows and arrows, with which they

made feeble efforts to drive off the Spaniards who landed at Punta Arenal, near Icacque, and who, finding no streams, sank holes in the sand, and so filled their casks with fresh water, as may be done, it is said, at the same spot even now.

And there—the source of endless misery to these happy harmless creatures—a certain Cacique, so goes the tale, took off Columbus' cap of crimson velvet, and replaced it with a circle of gold which he wore.

Alas for them! That fatal present of gold brought down on them enemies far more ruthless than the Caribs of the northern islands, who had a habit of coming down in their canoes and carrying off the gentle Arrawaks to eat them at their leisure, after the fashion which Defoe, always accurate, has immortalized in "Robinson Crusoe." Crusoe's island is, almost certainly, meant for Tobago; Man Friday had been stolen in Trinidad.

Columbus came no more to Trinidad. But the Spaniards had got into their wicked heads that there must be gold somewhere in the island; and they came again and again. Gold they could not get; for it does not exist in Trinidad. But slaves they could get; and the history of the Indians of Trinidad for the next century is the same as that of the rest of the West Indies: a history of mere rapine and cruelty. The Arrawaks, to do them justice, defended themselves more valiantly than the still gentler people of Hayti, Cuba, Jamaica,

Porto Rico, and the Lucayas: but not so valiantly as the fierce cannibal Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, whom the Spaniards were never able to subdue.

It was in 1595, nearly a century after Columbus discovered the island, that "Sir Robert Duddeley, in the Bear, with Captain Munck, in the Beare's Whelpe, with two small pinnesses, called the Frisking and the Earwig," ran across from Cape Blanco in Africa, straight for Trinidad, and anchored in Cedros Bay, which he calls Curiapan, inside Punta Icacque and Los Gallos—a bay which was then, as now, "very full of pelicans." The existence of the island was known to the English: but I am not aware that any Englishman had explored it. Two years before, an English ship, whose exploits are written in Hakluyt by one Henry May, had run in, probably to San Fernando, "to get refreshing; but could not, by reason the Spaniards had taken it. So that for want of victuals the company would have forsaken the ship." How different might have been the history of Trinidad, if at that early period, while the Indians were still powerful, a little colony of English had joined them, and intermarried with them. But it was not to be. The ship got away through the Boca Drago. The year after, seemingly, Captain Whiddon, Raleigh's faithful follower, lost eight men in the island in a Spanish ambush. But Duddeley was the first Englishman, as far as I am aware, who marched "for his experience and plea-

sure, four long marches through the island; the last fifty miles going and coming through a most monstrous thicke wood, for so is most part of the island; and lodging myself in Indian townes." Poor Sir Robert—"larding the lean earth as he stalked along"—in ruff and trunk hose, possibly too in burning steel breastplate, most probably along the old Indian path from San Fernando past Savannah Grande, and down the Ortoire to Mayaro on the east coast. How hot he must have been. How often, we will hope, he must have bathed on the journey in those crystal brooks, beneath the balisiers and the bamboos. He found "a fine-shaped and a gentle people, all naked and painted red" (with roucou), "their commanders wearing crowns of feathers," and a country "fertile and full of fruits, strange beasts and fowls, whereof munkeis, babions, and parats were in great abundance." His "munkeis" were, of course, the little Sapajous; his "babions" no true Baboons; for America disdains that degraded and dog-like form; but the great red Howlers. He was much delighted with the island; and "inskonced himself"—*i.e.* built a fort: but he found the Spanish governor, Berreo, not well pleased at his presence; "and no gold in the island save Marcasite" (iron pyrites); considered that Berreo and his three hundred Spaniards were "both poore and strong, and so he had no reason to assault them." He had but fifty men himself, and, moreover, was tired of waiting in vain for Sir

Walter Raleigh. So he sailed away northward, on the 12th of March, to plunder Spanish ships, with his brains full of stories of El Dorado, and the wonders of the Orinoco—among them "four golden half moons weighing a noble each, and two bracelets of silver," which a boat's crew of his had picked up from the Indians on the other side of the Gulf of Paria.

He left somewhat too soon. For on the 22nd of March Raleigh sailed into Cedros Bay, and then went up to La Brea and the Pitch Lake. There he noted, as Columbus had done before him, oysters growing on the mangrove roots; and noted, too, "that abundance of stone pitch, that all the ships of the world might be therewith laden from thence; and we made trial of it in trimming our shippes, to be most excellent good, and melteth not with the sun as the pitch of Norway." From thence he ran up the west coast to "the mountain of Annaparima" (St. Fernando hill), and passing the mouth of the Caroni, anchored at what was then the village of Port of Spain.

There some Spaniards boarded him, to buy linen and other things, all which he "entertained kindly, and feasted after our manner, by means whereof I learned as much of the estate of Guiana as I could, or as they knew, for those poore souldiers having been many years without wine, a few draughts made them merrie, in which mood they vaunted of

Guiana and the riches thereof,"—much which it had been better for Raleigh had he never heard.

Meanwhile the Indians came to him every night with lamentable complaints of Berreo's cruelty. "He had divided the island and given to every soldier a part. He made the ancient Caciques that were lords of the court, to be their slaves. He kept them in chains; he dropped their naked bodies with burning bacon, and such other torments, which" (continues Raleigh) "I found afterward to be true. For in the city" (San Josef), "when I entered it, there were five lords, or little kings, in one chain, almost dead of famine, and wasted with torments." Considering which; considering Berreo's treachery to Whiddon's men; and considering also that as Berreo himself, like Raleigh, was just about to cross the gulf to Guiana in search of El Dorado, and expected supplies from Spain; "to leave a garrison in my back, interested in the same enterprise, I should have savoured very much of the asse." So Raleigh fell upon the "Corps du Guard" in the evening, put them to the sword, sent Captain Caulfield with sixty soldiers onward, following himself with forty more, up the Caroni river, which was then navigable by boats; and took the little town of San Josef.

It is not clear whether the Corps du Guard which he attacked was at Port of Spain itself, or at the little mud fort at the confluence of the Caroni and San Josef rivers, which

was to be seen, with some old pieces of artillery in it, in the memory of old men now living. But that he came up past that fort, through the then primæval forest, tradition reports; and tells, too, how the prickly climbing palm,[1] the Croc-chien, or Hook-dog, pest of the forests, got its present name upon that memorable day. For, as the Spanish soldiers ran from the English, one of them was caught in the innumerable hooks of the Croc-chien, and never looking behind him in his terror, began shouting, "Suelta mi, Ingles!" Let me go, Englishman!—or, as others have it, "Valga mi, Ingles!" Take ransom for me, Englishman!—which name the palm bears unto this day.

So Raleigh, having, as one historian of Trinidad says, "acted like a tiger, lest he should savour of the ass," went his way to find El Dorado, and be filled with the fruit of his own devices: and may God have mercy on him; and on all who, like him, spoil the noblest instincts, and the noblest plans, for want of the "single eye."

But before he went, he "called all the Caciques who were enemies to the Spaniard, for there were some that Berreo had brought out of other countreys and planted there, to eat out and waste those that were natural of the place; and, by his Indian interpreter that he had brought out of England, made them understand that he was the servant of a Queene, who

[1] Desmoncus.

was the great Cacique of the North, and a virgin, and had more Caciques under her than there were trees in that island; and that she was an enemy to the Castellani in respect of their tyranny and oppression, and that she delivered all such nations about her as were by them oppressed, and, having freed all the northern world from their servitude, had sent me to free them also, and withal to defend the country of Guiana from their invasion and conquest. I showed them her Majesty's picture" (doubtless in ruff, farthingale, and stomacher laden with jewels), "which they so admired and honoured, as it had been easy to make them idolatrous thereof."

And so Raleigh, with Berreo as prisoner, "hasted away toward his proposed discovery," leaving the poor Indians of Trinidad to be eaten up by fresh inroads of the Spaniards.

There were, in his time, he says, five nations of Indians in the island,—"Jaios," "Arwacas," "Salvayos," (Salivas?) "Nepoios," and round San Josef "Carinepagotes;" and there were others, he confesses, which he does not name. Evil times were come upon them. Two years after, the Indians at Punta Galera (the north-east point of the island) told poor Keymis that they intended to escape to Tobago when they could no longer keep Trinidad, though the Caribs of Dominica were "such evil neighbours to it" that it was quite uninhabited. Their only fear was lest the Spaniards, worse

neighbours than even the Caribs, should follow them thither.

But as Raleigh and such as he went their way, Berreo and such as he seem to have gone their way also. The "Conquisitadores," the offscourings not only of Spain but of South Germany, and indeed of every Roman Catholic country in Europe, met the same fate as befel, if monk chroniclers are to be trusted, the great majority of the Normans who fought at Hastings. "The bloodthirsty and deceitful men did not live out half their days." By their own passions, and by no miraculous Nemesis, they civilized themselves off the face of the earth; and to them succeeded, as to the conquerors at Hastings, a nobler and gentler type of invaders. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Spaniards of ancient blood and high civilization came to Trinidad, and re-settled the island: especially the family of Farfan—"Farfan de los Godos," once famous in mediæval chivalry—if they will allow me the pleasure of for once breaking a rule of mine, and mentioning a name—who seem to have inherited for some centuries the old blessings of Psalm xxxvii.—

"Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the godly: and their inheritance shall endure for ever.

"They shall not be confounded in perilous times; and in the days of dearth they shall have enough."

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the Indians summoned up courage to revolt, after a foolish ineffectual fashion. According to tradition, and an old "romance muy doloroso," which might have been heard sung within the last hundred years, the governors, the Cabildo, and the clergy went to witness an annual feast of the Indians at Arena, a sandy spot (as its name signifies) near the central mountain of Tamana. In the middle of one of their warlike dances, the Indians, at a given signal, discharged a flight of arrows, which killed the governor, all the priests, and almost all the rest of the whites. Only a Farfan escaped, not without suspicion of forewarning by the rebels. He may have been a merciful man and just; while considering the gentle nature of the Indians, it is possible that some at least of their victims deserved their fate, and that the poor savages had wrongs to avenge which had become intolerable. As for the murder of the priests, we must remember always, that the Inquisition was then in strength throughout Spanish America; and could be, if it chose, aggressive and ruthless enough.

By the end of the seventeenth century there were but fifteen pueblos, or Indian towns, in the island; and the small-pox had made fearful ravages among them. Though they were not forced to work as slaves, a heavy capitation tax,

amounting, over most of the island, to two dollars ahead, was laid on them almost to the end of the last century. There seems to have been no reason in the nature of things why they should not have kept up their numbers; for the island was still, nineteen-twentieths of it, rich primæval forest. It may have been that they could not endure the confined life in the pueblos, or villages, to which they were restricted by law. But, from some cause or other, they died out, and that before far inferior numbers of invaders. In 1783, when the numbers of the whites were only 126, of the free coloured 295, and of the slaves 310, the Indians numbered only 2,032. In 1798, after the great immigration from the French West Indies, there were but 1,082 Indians in the island. It is true, that the white population had increased meanwhile to 2,151, the free coloured to 4,476, and the slaves to 10,000. But there was still room in plenty for 2,000 Indians. Probably many of them had been absorbed by intermarriage with the invaders. At present, there is hardly an Indian of certainly pure blood in the island, and that only in the northern mountains.

Trinidad ought to have been, at least for those who were not Indians, a happy place from the seventeenth almost to the nineteenth century, if it be true that happy is the people who have no history. Certain Dutchmen, whether men of war or pirates is not known, attacked it some time toward

the end of the seventeenth century, and, trying to imitate Raleigh, were well beaten in the jungles between the Caroni and San Josef. The Indians, it is said, joined the Spaniards in the battle; and the little town of San Josef was rewarded for its valour by being raised to the rank of a city by the King of Spain.

The next important event which I find recorded is after the treaty of 27th August, 1701, between "His Most Christian" and "His Most Catholic Majesty," by which the Royal Company of Guinea, established in France, was allowed to supply the Spanish colonies with 4,800 negroes per annum for ten years; of whom Trinidad took some share, and used them in planting cacao. So much the worse for it.

Next Captain Teach, better known as "Blackbeard," made his appearance, about 1716, off Port of Spain; plundered and burnt a brig laden with cacao; and when a Spanish frigate came in, and cautiously cannonaded him at a distance, sailed leisurely out of the Boca Grande. Little would any Spanish Guarda Costa trouble the soul of the valiant Captain Teach, with his six pistols slung in bandoliers down his breast, lighted matches stuck underneath the brim of his hat, and his famous black beard, the terror of all merchant captains from Trinidad to Guinea River, twisted into tails, and tied up with ribbons behind his ears. How he behaved himself for some years as a "ferocious human pig," like Ignatius Loyola before

his conversion, with the one virtue of courage; how he would blow out the candle in the cabin, and fire at random into his crew, on the ground "that if he did not kill one of them now and then they would forget who he was;" how he would shut down the hatches, and fill the ship with the smoke of brimstone and what not, to see how long he and his could endure a certain place,—to which they are, some of them, but too probably gone; how he has buried his money, or said that he had, "where none but he and Satan could find it, and the longest liver should take all;" how, out of some such tradition, Edgar Poe built up the wonderful tale of the Gold Bug; how the planters of certain Southern States, and even the Governor of North Carolina, paid him black-mail, and received black-mail from him likewise; and lastly, how he met a man as brave as he, but with a clear conscience and a clear sense of duty, in the person of Mr. Robert Maynard, first lieutenant of the Pearl, who found him after endless difficulties, and fought him hand-to-hand in Oberecock river, in Virginia, "the lieutenant and twelve men against Blackbeard and fourteen, till the sea was tinctured with blood around the vessel;" and how Maynard sailed into Bathtown with the gory head, black beard and all, hung at his jibboom end; all this is written—in the books in which it is written; which need not be read now, however sensational, by the British public.

The next important event which I find recorded in the annals of Trinidad is, that in 1725 the cacao crop failed. Some perhaps would have attributed the phenomenon to a comet, like that Sir William Beeston who, writing in 1664, says—"About this time appeared first the comet, which was the forerunner of the blasting of the cacao-trees, when they generally failed in Jamaica, Cuba, and Hispaniola." But no comet seems to have appeared in 1725 whereon to lay the blame; and therefore Father Gumilla, the Jesuit, may have been excused for saying that the failure of the trees was owing to the planters not paying their tithes; and for fortifying his statement by the fact, that one planter alone, named Rabelo, who paid his tithes duly, saved his trees and his crop.

The wicked (according to Dauxion Lavaysse, a Frenchman inoculated somewhat with scientific and revolutionary notions, who wrote a very clever book, unfortunately very rare now) said that the Trinidad cacao was then, as now, very excellent; that therefore it was sold before it was gathered; and that thus the planters were able to evade the payment of tithes. But Señor Rabelo had planted another variety, called Forestero, from the Brazils, which was at once of hardier habit, inferior quality, and slower ripening. Hence his trees withstood the blight: but, *en revanche*, hence also, merchants would not buy his crop before it was picked: thus his duty became his necessity, and he could not help paying his tithes.

Be that as it may, the good folk of Trinidad (and, to judge from their descendants, there must have been good folk among them) grew, from the failure of the cacao plantations, exceeding poor; so that in 1733 they had to call a meeting at San Josef, in order to tax the inhabitants, according to their means, toward thatching the Cabildo hall with palm-leaves. Nay, so poor did they become, that in 1740, the year after the small-pox had again devastated the island and the very monkeys had died of it,—as the hapless creatures died of cholera in hundreds a few years since, and of yellow fever the year before last, sensibly diminishing their numbers near the towns—let the conceit of human nature wince under the fact as it will, it cannot wince from under the fact—in 1740, I say, the war between Spain and England—that about Jenkins' ear—forced them to send a curious petition to his Majesty of Spain; and to ask—Would he be pleased to commiserate their situation? The failure of the cacao had reduced them to such a state of destitution that they could not go to Mass save once a year, to fulfil their "annual precepts;" when they appeared in clothes borrowed from each other.

Nay, it is said by those who should know best, that in those days the whole august body of the Cabildo had but one pair of smallclothes, which did duty among all the members.

Let no one be shocked. The smallclothes desiderated would have been of black satin, probably embroidered; and

fit, though somewhat threadbare, for the thigh of a magistrate and gentleman of Spain. But he would not have gone on ordinary days in a sansculottic state. He would have worn that most comfortable of loose nether garments, which may be seen on sailors in prints of the great war, and which came in again a while among the cunningest Highland sportsmen, namely, slops. Let no one laugh, either, at least in contempt, as the average British Philistine will think himself bound to do, at the fact that these men had not only no balance at their bankers, but no bankers with whom to have a balance. No men are more capable of supporting poverty with content and dignity than the Spaniards of the old school. For none are more perfect gentlemen, or more free from the base modern belief that money makes the man; and I doubt not that a member of the old Cabildo of San Josef in slops was far better company than an average British Philistine in trousers.

So slumbered on, only awakening to an occasional gentle revolt against their Priests, or the Governor sent to them from the Spanish Court, the good Spaniards of Trinidad; till the peace of 1783 woke them up, and they found themselves suddenly in a new, and an unpleasantly lively, world.

Rodney's victories had crippled Spain utterly; and crippled, too, the French West Indian islands, though not France itself: but the shrewd eye of a M. Rome de St. Laurent had

already seen in Trinidad a mine of wealth, which might set up again, not the Spanish West Indians merely, but those of the French West Indians who had exhausted, as they fancied, by bad cultivation, the soils of Guadaloupe, Martinique, and St. Lucia. He laid before the Intendant at Caraccas, on whom Trinidad then depended, a scheme of colonization, which was accepted, and carried out in 1783, by a man who, as far as I can discover, possessed in a pre-eminent degree that instinct of ruling justly, wisely, gently, and firmly, which is just as rare in this age as it was under the ancien régime. Don Josef Maria Chacon was his name,—a man, it would seem, like poor Kaiser Joseph of Austria, born before his time. Among his many honourable deeds, let this one at least be remembered; that he turned out of Trinidad the last Inquisitor who ever entered it.

Foreigners, who must be Roman Catholics (though on this point Chacon was as liberal as public opinion allowed him to be), were invited to settle on grants of Crown land. Each white person of either sex was to have some thirty-two acres, and half that quantity for every slave that he should bring. Free people of colour were to have half the quantity; and a long list of conditions was annexed, which, considering that they were tainted with the original sin of slave-holding, seem wise and just enough. Two articles especially prevented, as far as possible, absenteeism. Settlers who

retired from the island might take away their property; but they must pay 10 per cent. on all which they had accumulated; and their lands reverted to the Crown. Similarly, if the heirs of a deceased settler should not reside in the colony, 15 per cent. was to be levied on the inheritance. Well had it been for every West Indian island, British or other, if similar laws had been in force in them for the last hundred years.

So into Trinidad poured, for good and evil, a mixed population, principally French, to the number of some 12,000; till within a year or two the island was Spanish only in name. The old Spaniards, who held, many of them, large sheets of the forests which they had never cleared, had to give them up, with grumblings and heart-burnings, to the new comers. The boundaries of these lands were uncertain. The island had never been surveyed: and no wonder. The survey has been only completed during the last few years; and it is a mystery, to the non-scientific eye, how it has ever got done. One can well believe the story of the northern engineer who, when brought over to plan out a railroad, shook his head at the first sight of the "high woods." "At home," quoth he, "one works outside one's work: here one works inside it." Considering the density of the forests, one may as easily take a general sketch of a room from underneath the carpet as of Trinidad from the ground. However, thanks to the

energy of a few gentlemen, who found occasional holes in the carpet through which they could peep, the survey of Trinidad is now about complete.

But in those days ignorance of the island, as well as the battle between old and new interests, brought lawsuits, and all but civil war. Many of the French settlers were no better than they should be; many had debts in other islands; many of the Negros had been sent thither because they were too great ruffians to be allowed at home; and, what was worse, the premium of sixteen acres of land for every slave imported called up a system of stealing slaves, and sometimes even free coloured people, from other islands, especially from Grenada, by means of "artful negroes and mulatto slaves," who were sent over as crimps. I shall not record the words in which certain old Spaniards describe the new population of Trinidad ninety years ago. They, of course, saw everything in the blackest light; and the colony has long since weeded and settled itself under a course of good government. But poor Don Josef Maria Chacon must have had a hard time of it, while he tried to break into something like order such a motley crew.

He never broke them in, poor man. For just as matters were beginning to right themselves, the French Revolution broke out; and every French West Indian island burst into flame,—physical, alas! as well as moral. Then hurried

into Trinidad, to make confusion worse confounded, French Royalist families, escaping from the horrors in Hayti; and brought with them, it is said, many still faithful house-slaves born on their estates. But the Republican French, being nearly ten to one, were practical masters of the island; and Don Chacon, whenever he did anything unpopular, had to submit to "manifestations," with tricolour flag, Marseillaise, and Ça Ira, about the streets of Port of Spain; and to be privately informed by Admiral Artizabal that a guillotine was getting ready to cut off the heads of all loyal Spaniards, French, and British. This may have been an exaggeration: but wild deeds were possible enough in those wild days. Artizabal, the story goes, threatened to hang a certain ring-leader (name not given) at his yard-arm. Chacon begged the man's life; and the fellow was "spared to become the persecutor of his preserver, even to banishment, and death from a broken heart."[1]

At last the explosion came. The English sloop Zebra was sent down into the Gulf of Paria to clear it of French privateers, manned by the defeated maroons and brigands of the French islands, who were paying respect to no flag, but pirating indiscriminately. Chacon confessed himself glad enough to have them exterminated. He himself could

[1] M. Joseph, "History of Trinidad," from which most of these facts are taken.

not protect his own trade. But the neutrality of the island must be respected. Skinner, the Zebra's captain, sailed away toward the Boca, and found, to his grim delight, that the privateers had mistaken him for a certain English merchantman whom they had blockaded in Port of Spain, and were giving him chase. He let them come up and try to board; and what followed may be easily guessed. In three quarters of an hour they were all burnt, sunk, or driven on shore; the remnant of their crews escaped to Port of Spain, to join the French Republicans and vow vengeance.

Then, in an hapless hour, Captain Vaughan came into Port of Spain in the Alarm frigate. His intention was, of course, to protect the British and Spanish. They received him with open arms. But the privateers' men attacked a boat's crew of the Alarm, were beaten, raised a riot, and attacked a Welsh lady's house where English officers were at a party; after which, with pistol shots and climbing over back walls, the English, by help of a few Spanish gentlemen, escaped, leaving behind them their surgeon severely wounded.

Next morning, at sunrise, almost the whole of the frigate's crew landed in Port of Spain, fully armed, with Captain Vaughan at their head; the hot Welsh blood boiling in him. He unfurled the British flag, and marched into the town to take vengeance on the mob. A Spanish officer, with two or three men, came forward. What did a British captain mean

by violating the law of nations? Vaughan would chastise the rascally French who had attacked his men. Then he must either kill the Spaniard or take him prisoner: and the officer tendered his sword.

"I will not accept the arms of a brave man who is doing his duty," quoth poor over-valiant Vaughan, and put him aside. The hot Welsh blood was, nevertheless, the blood of a gentleman. They struck up "Britons, Strike Home," and marched on. The British and Spanish came out to entreat him. If a fight began, they would be all massacred. Still he marched on. The French, with three or four thousand slaves, armed, and mounting the tricolour cockade, were awaiting them, seemingly on the Savannah north of the town. Chacon was at his wits' end. He had but eighty soldiers, who said openly they would not fire on the English, but on the French. But the English were but 240, and the French twelve times that number. By deft cutting through cross streets Chacon got between the two bodies of madmen, and pleaded the indignity to Spain and the violation of neutral ground. The English must fight him before they fought the French. They would beat him: but as soon as the first shot was fired, the French would attack them likewise, and both parties alike would be massacred in the streets.

The hot Welsh blood cooled down before reason and

courage. Vaughan saluted Chacon; and marched back, hooted by the Republicans, who nevertheless kept at a safe distance. The French hunted every English and Irish person out of the town, some escaping barely with their lives. Only one man, however, was killed; and he, poor faithful slave, was an English negro.

Vaughan saw that he had done wrong; that he had possibly provoked a war; and made for his error the most terrible reparation which man can make.

His fears were not without foundation. His conduct formed the principal count in the list of petty complaints against England, on the strength of which, five months after, in October 1796, Spain declared war against England, and, in conjunction with France and Holland, determined once more to dispute the empire of the seas.

The moment was well chosen. England looked, to those who did not know her pluck, to have sunk very low. France was rising fast; and Buonaparte had just begun his Italian victories. So the Spanish Court—or at least Godoy, "Prince of Peace"—sought to make profit out of the French Republic. About the first profit which it made was the battle of St. Vincent; about the second, the loss of Trinidad.

On February 14, while Jervis and Nelson were fighting off Cape St. Vincent, Harvey and Abercrombie came into Carriacou in the Grenadines, with a gallant armada; seven

ships of the line, thirteen other men-of-war, and nigh 8,000 men, including 1,500 German jägers, on board.

On the 16th they were struggling with currents of the Bocas, piloted by a Mandingo negro, Alfred Sharper, who died in 1836, 105 years of age. The line-of-battle ships anchored in the magnificent landlocked harbour of Chaguaramas, just inside the Boca de Monos. The frigates and transports went up within five miles of Port of Spain.

Poor Chacon had, to oppose this great armament, 5,000 Spanish troops, 300 of them just recovering from yellow fever; a few old Spanish militia, who loved the English better than the French; and what Republican volunteers he could get together. They of course clamoured for arms, and demanded to be led against the enemy, as to this day; forgetting, as to this day, that all the fiery valour of Frenchmen is of no avail without officers, and without respect for those officers. Beside them, there lay under a little fort on Gaspar Grande island, in Chaguaramas harbour—ah, what a Paradise to be defiled by war—four Spanish line-of-battle ships and a frigate. Their admiral, Apodaca, was a foolish old devotee. Their crews numbered 1,600 men, 400 of whom were in hospital with yellow fever, and many only convalescent. The terrible Victor Hugues, it is said, offered a band of Republican sympathisers from Guadaloupe: but Chacon had no mind to take that Trojan horse within

his fortress. "We have too many lawless Republicans here already. Should the King send me aid, I will do my duty to preserve his colony for the crown: if not, it must fall into the hands of the English, whom I believe to be generous enemies, and more to be trusted than treacherous friends."

What was to be done; Perhaps only that which was done. Apodaca set fire to his ships, either in honest despair, or by orders from the Prince of Peace. At least, he would not let them fall into English hands. At three in the morning Port of Spain woke up, all aglare with the blaze six miles away to the north-west. Negros ran and shrieked, carrying this and that up and down upon their heads. Spaniards looked out, aghast. Frenchmen cried, "Aux armes!" and sang the Marseillaise. And still, over the Five Islands rose the glare. But the night was calm; the ships burnt slowly; and the San Damaso was saved by English sailors. So goes the tale; which, if it be, as I believe, correct, ought to be known to those adventurous Yankees who have talked, more than once, of setting up a company to recover the Spanish ships and treasure sunk in Chaguaramas. For the ships burned before they sunk; and Apodaca, being a prudent man, landed, or is said to have landed, all the treasure on the Spanish Main opposite.

He met Chacon in Port of Spain at daybreak. The good Governor, they say, wept, but did not reproach. The admiral

crossed himself; and, when Chacon said "All is lost," answered (or did not answer, for the story, like most good stories, is said not to be quite true), "Not all; I saved the image of St. Jago de Compostella, my patron and my ship's." His ship's patron, however, says M. Joseph, was St. Vincent. Why tell the rest of the story? It may well be guessed. The English landed in force. The French Republicans (how does history repeat itself!) broke open the arsenal, overpowering the Spanish guard, seized some 3,000 to 5,000 stand of arms, and then never used them, but retired into the woods. They had, many of them, fought like tigers in other islands; some, it may be, under Victor Hugues himself. But here they had no leaders. The Spanish, overpowered by numbers, fell back across the Dry River to the east of the town, and got on a height. The German jägers climbed the beautiful Laventille hills, and commanded the Spanish and the two paltry mud forts on the slopes: and all was over, happily with almost no loss of life.

Chacon was received by Abercrombie and Harvey with every courtesy; a capitulation was signed which secured the honours of war to the military, and law and safety to the civil inhabitants; and Chacon was sent home to Spain to be tried by a court-martial; honourably acquitted; and then by French Republican intrigues, calumniated, memorialised against, subscribed against, and hunted (Buonaparte having

with his usual meanness, a hand in the persecution) into exile and penury in Portugal. At last his case was heard a second time, and tardy justice done, not by popular clamour, but by fair and deliberate law. His nephew set out to bring the good man home in triumph. He found him dying in a wretched Portuguese inn. Chacon heard that his honour was cleared at last, and so gave up the ghost.

Thus ended—as Earth's best men have too often ended—the good Don Alonzo Chacon. His only monument in the island is one, after all, "ære perennius;" namely, that most beautiful flowering shrub which bears his name; Warsewiczia, some call it; others, Calycophyllum; but the botanists of the island continue loyally the name of Chaconia to those blazing crimson spikes which every Christmas-tide renew throughout the wild forests, of which he would have made a civilized garden, the memory of the last and the best of the Spanish Governors.

So Trinidad became English; and Picton ruled it, for a while, with a rod of iron.

I shall not be foolish enough to enter here into the merits or demerits of the Picton case, which once made such a noise in England. His enemies' side of the story will be found in M'Callum's "Travels in Trinidad;" his friends' side in Robinson's "Life of Picton," two books, each of which will seem, I think, to him who will read them alternately,

rather less wise than the other. But those who may choose to read the two books must remember, that questions of this sort have not two sides merely, but more; being not superficies, but solids; and that the most important side is that on which the question stands, namely, its bottom; which is just the side which neither party like to be turned up, because under it (at least in the West Indies) all the beetles and cockroaches, centipedes and scorpions, are nestled away out of sight: and there, as long since decayed, they, or their exuviæ and dead bodies, may remain. The good people of Trinidad have long since agreed to let bygones be bygones; and it speaks well for the common sense and good feeling of the islanders, as well as for the mildness and justice of British rule, that in two generations such a community as that of modern Trinidad should have formed itself out of materials so discordant. That British rule has been a solid blessing to Trinidad, all honest folk know well. Even in Picton's time the population increased, in six years, from 17,700 to 28,400; in 1851 it was 69,600; and it is now far larger.

But Trinidad has gained, by becoming English, more than mere numbers. Had it continued Spanish, it would probably now be, like Cuba, a slave-holding and slave-trading island, wealthy, luxurious, profligate; and Port of Spain would be such another wen upon the face of God's earth as that magni-

ficent abomination, the city of Havanna. Or, as an almost more ugly alternative, it might have played its part in that great triumph of Bliss by Act of Parliament, which set mankind to rights for ever, when Mr. Canning did the universe the honour of "calling the new world into existence to redress the balance of the old." It might have been—probably would have been—conquered by a band of "sympathisers" from the neighbouring Republic of Venezuela, and have been "called into existence" by the massacre of the respectable folk, the expulsion of capital, and the establishment (with a pronunciamento and a revolution every few years) of a Republic such as those of Spanish America, combining every vice of civilization with every vice of savagery. From that fate, as every honest man in Trinidad knows well, England has saved the island; and therefore every honest man in Trinidad is loyal (with occasional grumblings, of course, as is the right of free-born Britons, at home and abroad) to the British flag.

CHAPTER IV.

PORT OF SPAIN.

THE first thing notable, on landing in Port of Spain at the low quay which has been just reclaimed from the mud of the gulf, is the multitude of people who are doing nothing. It is not that they have taken an hour's holiday to see the packet come in. You will find them, or their brown duplicates, in the same places to-morrow and next day. They stand idle in the market-place, not because they have not been hired, but because they do not want to be hired; being able to live like the Lazzaroni of Naples, on "Midshipman's half-pay—nothing a day, and find yourself." You are told that there are 8,000 human beings in Port of Spain alone without visible means of subsistence, and you congratulate Port of Spain on being such an Elysium that people can live there—not without eating, for every child, and most women you pass, are eating something or other all day long—but without working. The fact is, that though they

will eat as much and more than an European, if they can get it, they can do well without food; and feed, as do the Lazzaroni, on mere heat and light. The best substitute for a dinner is a sleep under a south wall in the blazing sun; and there are plenty of south walls in Port of Spain. In the French islands, I am told, such Lazzaroni are caught up and set to Government work, as "strong rogues and masterless men," after the ancient English fashion. But is such a course fair? If a poor man neither steals, begs, nor rebels (and these people do not do the two latter), has he not as much right to be idle as a rich man? To say that neither has a right to be idle is, of course, sheer socialism, and a heresy not to be tolerated.

Next, the stranger will remark, here as at Grenada, that every one he passes looks strong, healthy, and well fed. One meets few or none of those figures and faces, small, scrofulous, squinny, and haggard, which disgrace the so-called civilization of a British city. Nowhere in Port of Spain will you see such human beings as in certain streets of London, Liverpool, or Glasgow. Every one, plainly, can live and thrive if they choose; and very pleasant it is to know that.

The road leads on past the Custom-house; and past, I am sorry to say, evil smells, which are too common still in Port of Spain, though fresh water is laid on from the mountains. I have no wish to complain, especially on first landing,

of these kind and hospitable cities. But as long as Port of Spain—the suburbs especially—smells as it does after sundown every evening, so long will an occasional outbreak of cholera or yellow fever hint that there are laws of cleanliness and decency which are both able and ready to avenge themselves. You cross the pretty "Marine Square," with its fountain and flowering trees, and beyond them on the right the Roman Catholic Cathedral, a stately building with Palmistes standing as tall sentries round; soon you go up a straight street, with a glimpse of a large English church, which must have been still more handsome than now before its tall steeple was shaken down by an earthquake. The then authorities, I have been told, applied to the Colonial Office for money to rebuild it: but the request was refused; on the ground, it may be presumed, that whatever ills Downing Street might have inflicted on the West Indies, it had not, as yet, gone so far as to play the part of Poseidon Ennosigæus.

Next comes a glimpse, too, of large—even too large—Government buildings, brick-built, pretentious, without beauty of form. But, however ugly in itself a building may be in Trinidad, it is certain, at least after a few years, to look beautiful, because embowered among noble flowering timber trees, like those that fill "Brunswick Square," and surround the great church on its south side.

Under cool porticoes and through tall doorways are seen dark "stores," filled with all manner of good things, from Britain or from the United States. These older-fashioned houses, built, I presume, on the Spanish model, are not without a certain stateliness, from the depth and breadth of their chiaroscuro. Their doors and windows reach almost to the ceiling, and ought to be plain proofs, in the eyes of certain discoverers of the "giant cities of Bashan," that the old Spanish and French colonists were nine or ten feet high apiece. On the door-steps sit Negresses in gaudy print dresses, with stiff turbans (which are, according to this year's fashion, of chocolate and yellow silk plaid, painted with thick yellow paint, and cost in all some four dollars), all aiding in the general work of doing nothing: save where here and there a hugely fat Negress, possibly with her "head tied across" in a white turban (sign of mourning), sells, or tries to sell, abominable sweetmeats, strange fruits, and junks of sugar-cane, to be gnawed by the dawdlers in mid-street, while they carry on their heads everything and anything, from half a barrow-load of yams to a saucer or a beer-bottle. We never, however, saw, as Tom Cringle did, a Negro carrying a burden on his chin.

I fear that a stranger would feel a shock—and that not a slight one—at the first sight of the average Negro women of Port of Spain, especially the younger. Their masculine

figures; their ungainly gestures, their loud and sudden laughter, even when walking alone, and their general coarseness, shocks, and must shock. It must be remembered that this is a seaport town; and one in which the licence usual in such places on both sides of the Atlantic is aggravated by the superabundant animal vigour and the perfect independence of the younger women. It is a painful subject. I shall touch it in these pages as seldom and as lightly as I can. There is, I verily believe, a large class of Negresses in Port of Spain and in the country, both Catholic and Protestant, who try their best to be respectable, after their standard: but unfortunately, here, as elsewhere over the world, the scum rises naturally to the top, and intrudes itself on the eye. The men are civil fellows enough, if you will, as in duty bound, be civil to them. If you are not, ugly capacities will flash out fast enough, and too fast. If any one says of the Negro, as of the Russian, "He is but a savage polished over: you have only to scratch him, and the barbarian shows underneath:" the only answer to be made is—Then do not scratch him. It will be better for you, and for him.

When you have ceased looking—even staring—at the black women and their ways, you become aware of the strange variety of races which people the city. Here passes an old Coolie Hindoo, with nothing on but his lungee round

his loins, and a scarf over his head; a white-bearded, delicate-featured old gentleman, with probably some caste-mark of red paint on his forehead; his thin limbs, and small hands and feet, contrasting strangely with the brawny Negros round. There comes a bright-eyed young lady, probably his daughter-in-law, hung all over with bangles, in a white muslin petticoat, crimson cotton-velvet jacket, and green gauze veil, with her naked brown baby astride on her hip; a clever, smiling, delicate little woman, who is quite aware of the brightness of her own eyes. And who are these three boys in dark blue coatees and trousers, one of whom carries, hanging at one end of a long bamboo, a couple of sweet potatoes; at the other, possibly, a pebble to balance them? As they approach, their doleful visage betrays them. Chinese they are, without a doubt: but whether old or young, men or women, you cannot tell, till the initiated point out that the women have chignons and no hats, the men hats with their pig-tails coiled up under them. Beyond this distinction, I know none visible. Certainly none in those sad visages—"Offas, non facies," as old Ammianus Marcellinus has it.

But why do Chinese never smile? Why do they look as if some one had sat upon their noses as soon as they were born, and they had been weeping bitterly over the calamity ever since? They, too, must have their moments of relaxation: but when? Once, and once only, in Port of Spain,

we saw a Chinese woman, nursing her baby, burst into an audible laugh: and we looked at each other, as much astonished as if our horses had begun to talk.

Chinese Man and Woman.

There again is a group of coloured men of all ranks, talking eagerly, business, or even politics; some of them as well dressed as if they were fresh from Europe; some of them, too, six feet high, and broad in proportion; as fine a race, physically, as one would wish to look upon; and with no want of shrewdness either, or determination, in their faces:

a race who ought, if they will be wise and virtuous, to have before them a great future. Here come home from the convent school two coloured young ladies, probably pretty, possibly lovely, certainly gentle, modest, and well-dressed according to the fashions of Paris or New York; and here comes the unmistakeable Englishman, tall, fair, close shaven, arm-in-arm with another man, whose more delicate features, more sallow complexion, and little moustache, mark him as some Frenchman or Spaniard of old family. Both are dressed as if they were going to walk up Pall Mall or the Rue de Rivoli; for "go-to-meeting clothes" are somewhat too much *de rigueur* here; a shooting-jacket and wide-awake betrays the newly-landed Englishman. Both take off their hats with a grand air to a lady in a carriage; for they are very fine gentlemen indeed, and intend to remain such: and well that is for the civilization of the island; for it is from such men as these, and from their families, that the good manners for which West Indians are, or ought to be, famous, have permeated down, slowly but surely, through all classes of society save the very lowest.

The straight and level street, swarming with dogs, vultures, chickens and goats, passes now out of the old into the newer part of the city; and the type of the houses changes at once. Some are mere wooden sheds of one or two rooms, com-

fortable enough in that climate, where a sleeping-place is all that is needed—if the occupiers would but keep them clean. Other houses, wooden too, belong to well-to-do folk. Over high walls you catch sight of jalousies and verandahs, inside which must be most delightful darkness and coolness. Indeed, one cannot fancy more pleasant nests than some of the little gaily-painted wooden houses, standing on stilts to let the air under the floors, and all embowered in trees and flowers, which line the roads in the suburbs; and which are inhabited, we were told, by people engaged in business.

But what would—or at least ought to—strike the new comer's eye with most pleasurable surprise, and make him realize into what a new world he has been suddenly translated—even more than the Negros, and the black vultures sitting on roof-ridges or stalking about in mid-street—are the flowers which show over the walls on each side of the street. In that little garden, not thirty feet broad, what treasures there are! A tall palm—whether Palmiste or Oil-palm—has its smooth trunk hung all over with orchids, tied on with wire. Close to it stands a purple Dracæna, such as are put on English dinner-tables in pots: but this one is twenty feet high; and next to it is that strange tree the Clavija, of which the Creoles are justly fond. A single straight stem, fifteen feet high, carries huge oblong leaves atop, and beneath

them, growing out of the stem itself, delicate panicles of little white flowers, fragrant exceedingly. A double blue pea[1] and a purple Bignonia are scrambling over shrubs and walls. And what is this which hangs over into the road, some fifteen feet in height—long, bare, curving sticks, carrying each at its end a flat blaze of scarlet? What but the Poinsettia, paltry scions of which, like the Dracæna, adorn our hothouses and dinner-tables. The street is on fire with it all the way up, now in mid-winter; while at the street end opens out a green park, fringed with noble trees all in full leaf; underneath them more pleasant little suburban villas; and behind all, again, a background of steep wooded mountain a thousand feet in height. That is the Savanna, the public park and race-ground; such as neither London nor Paris can boast.

One may be allowed to regret that the exuberant loyalty of the citizens of Port of Spain has somewhat defaced one end at least of their Savanna; for in expectation of a visit from the Duke of Edinburgh, they erected for his reception a pile of brick, of which the best that can be said is that it holds a really large and stately ball-room, and the best that can be hoped is, that the authorities will hide it as quickly as possible with a ring of Palmistes, Casuarinas, Sandboxes, and every quick-growing tree. Meanwhile, as

[1] Clitoria Ternatea; which should be in all our hothouses.

his Royal Highness did not come, the citizens wisely thought that they might as well enjoy their new building themselves. So there, on set high days, the Governor and the Lady of the Governor hold their court. There, when the squadron comes in, officers in uniform dance at desperate sailors' pace with delicate Creoles; some of them, coloured as well as white, so beautiful in face and figure that one could almost pardon the jolly tars if they enacted a second Mutiny of the Bounty, and refused one and all to leave the island and the fair dames thereof. And all the while the warm night wind rushes in through the high open windows; and the fire-flies flicker up and down, in and out, and you slip away on to the balcony to enjoy—for after all it is very hot—the purple star-spangled night; and see aloft the saw of the mountain ridges against the black-blue sky and below—what a contrast!—the crowd of white eyeballs and white teeth—Negros, Coolies, Chinese—all grinning and peeping upward against the railing, in the hope of seeing—through the walls—the "buccra quality" enjoy themselves.

An even pleasanter sight we saw once in that large room, a sort of agricultural and horticultural show, which augured well for the future of the colony. The flowers were not remarkable, save for the taste shown in their arrangement, till one recollected that they were not brought from hothouses, but grown in mid-winter in the open air. The roses, of which

West Indians are very fond, as they are of all "home," *i.e.* European, flowers, were not as good as those of Europe. The rose in Trinidad, though it flowers three times a year, yet, from the great heat and moisture, runs too much to wood. But the roots, especially the different varieties of yam, were very curious; and their size proved the wonderful food-producing powers of the land when properly cultivated. The poultry, too, were worthy of an English show. Indeed, the fowl seems to take to tropical America as the horse has to Australia, as to a second native-land; and Trinidad alone might send an endless supply to the fowl-market of the Northern States, even if that should not be quite true which some one said, that you might turn an old cock loose in the bush, and he, without further help, would lay more eggs, and bring up more chickens, than you could either eat or sell.

But the most interesting element of that exhibition was the coco-nut fibre products of Messrs. Uhrich and Gerold, of which more in another place. In them lies a source of further wealth to the colony, which may stand her in good stead when Port of Spain becomes, as it must become, one of the great emporiums of the West.

Since our visit the great ball-room has seen—even now is seeing—strange vicissitudes. For the new Royal College, having as yet no buildings of its own, now keeps school, it is

said, therein—alas for the inkstains on that beautiful floor! And by last advices, a "troupe of artistes" from Martinique, there being no theatre in Port of Spain, have been doing their play-acting in it; and Terpsichore and Thalia (Melpomene, I fear, haunts not the stage of Martinique) have been hustling all the other Muses downstairs at sunset, and joining their jinglings to the chorus of tom-toms and chac-chacs which resounds across the Savannah, at least till 10 P.M., from all the suburbs.

The road—and all the roads round Port of Spain, thanks to Sir Ralph Woodford, are as good as English roads—runs between the Savannah and the mountain spurs, and past the Botanic Gardens, which are a credit, in more senses than one, to the Governors of the island. For in them, amid trees from every quarter of the globe, and gardens kept up in the English fashion, with fountains, too, so necessary in this tropical clime, stood a large "Government House." This house was some years ago destroyed; and the then Governor took refuge in a cottage just outside the garden. A sum of money was voted to rebuild the big house: but the Governors, to their honour, have preferred living in the cottage, adding to it from time to time what was necessary for mere comfort; and have given the old gardens to the city, as a public pleasure-ground, kept up at Government expense.

This Paradise—for such it is—is somewhat too far from the city; and one passes in it few people, save an occasional brown nurse. But when Port of Spain becomes, as it surely will, a great commercial city, and the slopes of Laventille, Belmont, and St. Ann's, just above the gardens, are studded, as they surely will be, with the villas of rich merchants, then will the generous gift of English Governors be appreciated and used; and the Botanic Gardens will become a Tropic Garden of the Tuileries, alive, at five o'clock every evening, with human flowers of every hue.

CHAPTER V.

A LETTER FROM A WEST INDIAN COTTAGE ORNÉE.

December 30, 1869.

MY DEAR ——,

We are actually settled in a West Indian country-house, amid a multitude of sights and sounds so utterly new and strange, that the mind is stupified by the continual effort to take in, or (to confess the truth) to gorge without hope of digestion, food of every conceivable variety. The whole day long new objects and their new names have jostled each other in the brain, in dreams as well as in waking thoughts. Amid such a confusion, to describe this place as a whole is as yet impossible. It must suffice if you find in this letter a sketch or two—not worthy to be called a study—of particular spots which seem typical, beginning with my bath-room window, as the scene which first proved to me, at least, that we were verily in the Tropics.

You look out—would that you did look in fact!—over the

low sill. The gravel outside, at least, is an old friend; it consists of broken bits of grey Silurian rock, and white quartz among it; and one touch of Siluria makes the whole world kin. But there the kindred ends. A few green weeds, looking just like English ones, peep up through the gravel. Weeds, all over the world, are mostly like each other; poor, thin, pale in leaf, small and meagre in stem and flower: meaner forms which fill up for good, and sometimes, too, for harm, the gaps left by Nature's aristocracy of grander and, in these tropics, more tyrannous and destroying forms. So like home weeds they look: but pick one, and you find it unlike anything at home. That one happens to be, as you may see by its little green mouse-tails, a pepper-weed,[1] first cousin to the great black-pepper bush in the gardens near by, with the berries of which you may burn your mouth gratis.

So it is, you would find, with every weed in the little cleared dell, some fifteen feet deep, beyond the gravel. You could not—I certainly cannot—guess at the name, seldom at the family, of a single plant. But I am going on too fast. What are those sticks of wood which keep the gravel bank up? Veritable bamboos; and a bamboo-pipe, too, is carrying the trickling cool water into the bath close by. Surely we are in the Tropics. You hear a sudden rattle, as of boards and brown paper, overhead, and find that it is the clashing

[1] Peperomia.

of the huge leaves of a young fan palm,[1] growing not ten feet from the window. It has no stem as yet; and the lower leaves have to be trimmed off, or they would close up the path, so that only the great forked green butts of them are left, bound to each other by natural matting: but overhead they range out nobly in leaf-stalks ten feet long, and fans full twelve feet broad; and this is but a baby, a three years' old thing. Surely, again, we are in the Tropics. Ten feet further, thrust all awry by the huge palm-leaves, grows a young tree, unknown to me, looking like a walnut. Next to it an orange, covered with long prickles and small green fruit, its roots propped up by a semi-cylindrical balk of timber, furry inside, which would puzzle a Hampshire woodsman; for it is, plainly, a groo-groo or a coco-palm, split down the middle. Surely, again, we are in the Tropics. Beyond it, again, blaze great orange and yellow flowers, with long stamens, and pistil curving upwards out of them. They belong to a twining, scrambling bush, with finely-pinnated mimosa leaves. That is the "Flower-fence,"[2] so often heard of in past years; and round it hurries to and fro a great orange butterfly, larger seemingly than any English kind. Next to it is a row of Hibiscus shrubs, with broad crimson flowers; then a row of young Screw-pines,[3] from the East Indian Islands, like spiral pine-apple plants twenty feet high standing on stilts. Yes:

[1] Sabal. [2] Poinziana. [3] Pandanus.

surely we are in the Tropics. Over the low roof (for the cottage is all of one storey) of purple and brown and white shingles, baking in the sun, rises a tall tree, which looks (as so many do here) like a walnut, but is not one. It is the "Poui" of the Indians,[1] and will be covered shortly with brilliant saffron flowers.

I turn my chair and look into the weedy dell. The ground on the opposite slope (slopes are, you must remember, here as steep as house roofs, the last spurs of true mountains) is covered with a grass like tall rye-grass, but growing in tufts. That is the famous Guinea-grass[2] which, introduced from Africa, has spread over the whole West Indies. Dark lithe Coolie prisoners, one a gentle young fellow, with soft beseeching eyes, and "Felon" printed on the back of his shirt, are cutting it for the horses, under the guard of a Mulatto turnkey, a tall, steadfast, dignified man; and between us and them are growing along the edge of the gutter, veritable pine-apples in the open air, and a low green tree just like an apple, which is a Guava; and a tall stick, thirty feet high, with a flat top of gigantic curly horse chestnut-leaves, which is a Trumpet-tree.[3] There are hundreds of them in the mountains round: but most of them dead, from the intense drought and fires of last year. Beyond it, again, is a round-headed tree, looking like a huge Portugal laurel, covered with racemes

[1] Tecoma (serratifolia ?). [2] Panicum jumentorum. [3] Cecropia.

of purple buds. That is an "Angelim;"[1] when full grown, one of the finest timbers in the world. And what are those at the top of the brow, rising out of the rich green scrub? Verily, again, we are in the Tropics. They are palms

Groo-groos.

doubtless, some thirty feet high each, with here and there a young one springing up like a gigantic crown of male-fern. The old ones have straight grey stems, often prickly enough,

[1] Andira inermis.

and thickened in the middle; grey last year's leaves hanging down; and feathering round the top, a circular plume of pale green leaves, like those of a coco-nut. But these are not cocos. The last year's leaves of the coco are rich yellow, and its stem is curved. These are groo-groos;[1] they stand as fresh proofs that we are indeed in the Tropics, and as "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

For it is a joy for ever, a sight never to be forgotten, to have once seen palms, breaking through and, as it were, defying, the soft rounded forms of the broad-leaved vegetation by the stern grace of their simple lines; the immoveable pillar-stem looking the more immoveable beneath the toss and lash and flicker of the long leaves, as they awake out of their sunlit sleep, and rage impatiently for a while before the mountain gusts, and fall asleep again. Like a Greek statue in a luxurious drawing-room, sharp cut, cold, virginal; shaming, by the grandeur of mere form, the voluptuousness of mere colour, however rich and harmonious; so stands the palm in the forest; to be worshipped rather than to be loved. Look at the drawings of the Oreodoxa-avenue at Rio, in M. Agassiz's charming book. Would that you could see actually such avenues, even from the sea, as we have seen them in St. Vincent and Guadaloupe: but look at the mere pictures of them in

[1] Acrocomia sclerocarpa.

that book, and you will sympathise, surely, with our new palm-worship.

And lastly, what is that giant tree which almost fills the centre of the glen, towering with upright but branching limbs, and huge crown, thinly leaved, double the height of all the trees around? An ash? Something like an ash in growth; but when you look at it through the glasses (indispensable in the tropic forest), you see that the foliage is more like that of the yellow horse-chestnut. And no British ash, not even the Altyre giants, ever reached to half that bulk. It is a Silk-cotton tree; a Ceiba[1]—say, rather, the Ceiba of the glen; for these glens have a habit of holding each one great Ceiba, which has taken its stand at the upper end, just where the mountain-spurs run together in an amphitheatre; and being favoured (it may be supposed) by the special richness of the down-washed soil at that spot, grows to one of those vast air-gardens of creepers and parasites of which we have so often read, and dreamed. Such a one is this: but we will not go up to it now. This sketch shall be completed by the background of green and grey, fading aloft into tender cobalt: the background of mountain, ribbed and gullied into sharpest slopes by the tropic rains, yet showing, even where steepest, never a face of rock, or a crag peeping through the trees. Up to the sky-line, a thousand feet aloft, all is

[1] Eriodendron anfractuosum.

green; and that, instead of being, as in Europe, stone or moor, is jagged and feathered with gigantic trees. How rich! you would say. Yet these West Indians only mourn over its desolation and disfigurement; and point to the sheets of grey stems, which hang like mist along the upper slopes. They look to us, on this 30th of December, only as April signs that the woodlands have not quite burst into full leaf. But to the inhabitants they are tokens of those fearful fires which raged over the island during the long drought of this summer; when the forests were burning for a whole month, and this house scarcely saved; when whole cane-fields, mills, dwelling-houses, went up as tinder and flame in a moment, and the smoky haze from the burning island spread far out to sea. And yet, where the fire passed six months ago, all is now a fresh impenetrable undergrowth of green; creepers covering the land, climbing up and shrouding the charred stumps; young palms, like Prince of Wales's feathers, breaking up, six or eight feet high, among a wilderness of sensitive plants, scarlet-flowered dwarf Balisiers,[1] climbing fern,[2] convolvuluses of every hue, and an endless variety of outlandish leaves, over which flutter troops of butterflies. How the seeds of the plants, and the eggs of the insects, have been preserved, who can tell? But there their children are, in myriads; and ere a generation has passed, every dead

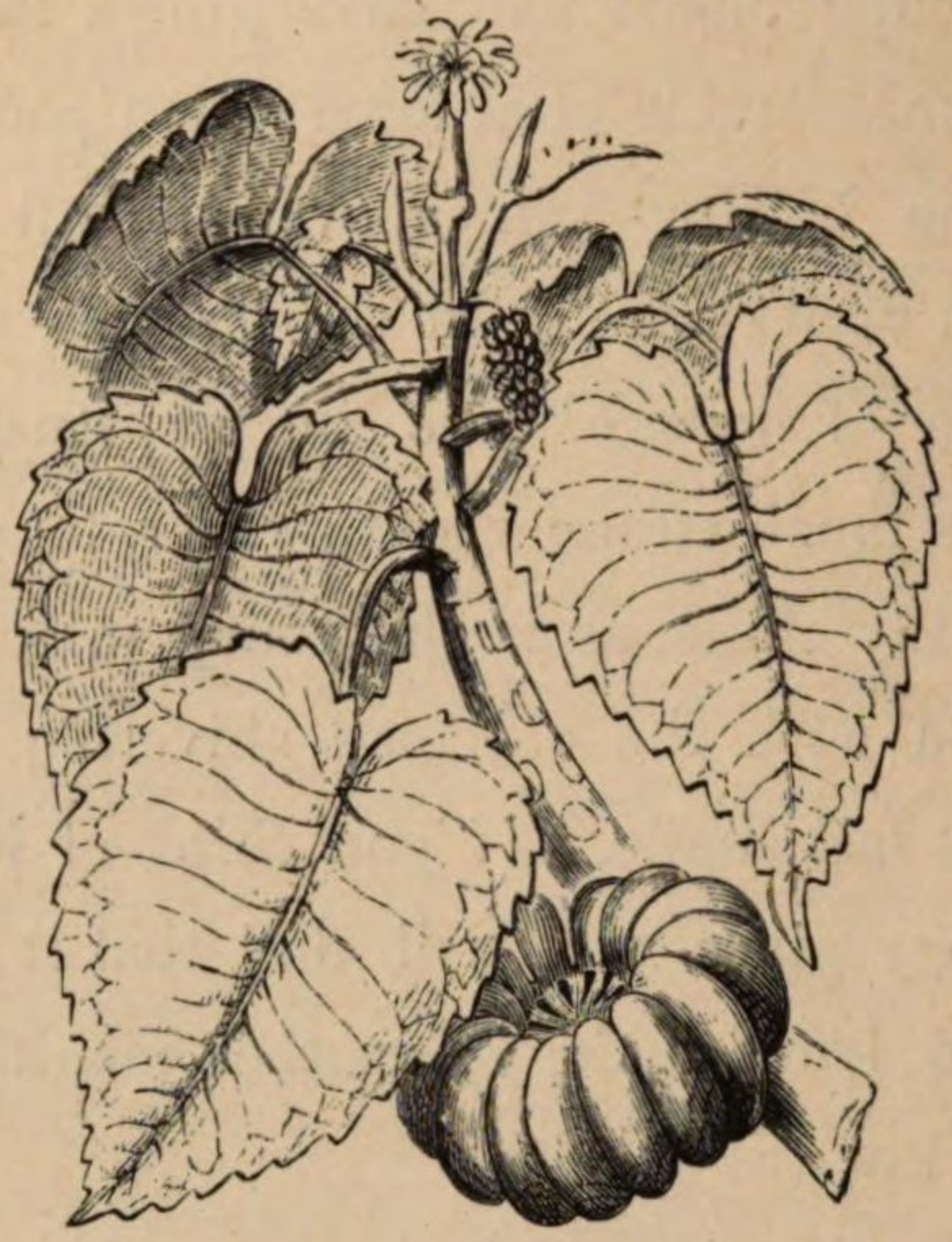
[1] Heliconia Caribæa. [2] Lygodium venustum.

grey stem will have disappeared before the ants and beetles and great wood-boring bees who rumble round in blue-black armour; the young plants will have grown into great trees beneath the immeasurable vital force which pours all the year round from the blazing sun above, and all be as it was once more. In verity we are in the Tropics, where the so-called "powers of nature" are in perpetual health and strength, and as much stronger and swifter, for good and evil, than in our chilly clime, as is the young man in the heat of youth compared with the old man shivering to his grave. Think over that last simile. If you think of it in the light which physiology gives, you will find that it is not merely a simile, but a true analogy; another manifestation of a great physical law.

Thus much for the view at the back—a chance scene, without the least pretensions to what average people would call beauty of landscape. But, oh that we could show you the view in front! The lawn with its flowering shrubs, tiny specimens of which we admire in hothouses at home; the grass as green (for it is now the end of the rainy season) as that of England in May, winding away into the cool shade of strange evergreens; the yellow coco-nut palms on the nearest spur of hill throwing back the tender blue of the higher mountains; the huge central group of trees—Saman,[1] Sandbox,[2]

[1] Inga Saman; "Caraccas tree." [2] Hura crepitans.

and Fig, with the bright ostrich plumes of a climbing palm towering through the mimosa-like foliage of the Saman; and



Sandbox.

Erythrinas[1] (Bois immortelles, as they call them here), their all but leafless boughs now blazing against the blue sky with vermilion flowers, trees of red coral sixty feet in height. Ah that we could show you the avenue on the right, composed of palms from every quarter of the tropics—palms with smooth stems, or with prickly ones, with fan leaves, feather leaves, leaves (as in the wine-palm[2]) like Venus's hair fern; some, again, like the Cocorite,[3] almost stemless,

[1] Erythrina umbrosa. [2] Caryota. [3] Maximiliana.

rising in a huge ostrich plume which tosses in the land breeze, till the long stiff leaflets seem to whirl like the spokes of a green glass wheel. Ah that we could wander with you through the botanic garden beyond, amid fruits and flowers brought together from all the lands of the perpetual summer; or even give you, through the great arches of the bamboo clumps, as they creak and rattle sadly in the wind, and the Bauhinias, like tall and ancient whitethorns, which shade the road, one glance of the flat green Savannah, with its herds of kine, beyond which lies, buried in flowering trees, and backed by mountain woods, the city of Port of Spain. One glance, too, under the boughs of the great Cotton-tree at the gate, at the still sleeping sea, with one tall Coolie-ship at anchor, seen above green cane-fields and Coolie gardens, gay with yellow Croton and purple Dracæna, and crimson Poinsettia, and the grand leaves of the grandest of all plants, the Banana, food of paradise. Or, again, far away to the extreme right, between the flat tops of the great Saman-avenue at the barracks, and the wooded mountain-spurs which rush down into the sea, the islands of the Bocas floating in the shining water; and beyond them, a cloud among the clouds, the peak of a mighty mountain, with one white tuft of mist upon its top. Ah that we could show you but that, and tell you that you were looking at the "Spanish Main;" at South America itself, at the last point of the

Venezuelan Cordillera, and the hills where jaguars lie. If you could but see what we see daily; if you could see with us the strange combination of rich and luscious beauty, with vastness and repose, you would understand, and excuse, the tendency to somewhat grandiose language which tempts perpetually those who try to describe the Tropics, and know well that they can only fail.

In presence of such forms and such colouring as this, one becomes painfully sensible of the poverty of words, and the futility, therefore, of all word-painting; of the inability, too, of the senses to discern and define objects of such vast variety; of our æsthetic barbarism, in fact, which has no choice of epithets save between such as "great," and "vast," and "gigantic;" between such as "beautiful," and "lovely," and "exquisite," and so forth; which are, after all, intellectually only one stage higher than the half-brute Wah! wah! with which the savage grunts his astonishment—call it not admiration; epithets which are not, perhaps, intellectually as high as the "God is great" of the Mussulman, who is wise enough not to attempt any analysis, either of Nature or of his feelings about her; and wise enough also (not having the fear of Spinoza before his eyes) to "in omni ignoto confugere ad Deum"—in presence of the unknown, to take refuge in God.

To describe to you, therefore, the botanic garden (in which

the cottage stands), would take a week's work of words, which would convey no images to your mind. Let it be enough to say, that our favourite haunt in all the gardens is a little dry valley, beneath the loftiest group of trees. At its entrance rises a great Tamarind, and a still greater Saman ; both have

Tamarind.

leaves like a Mimosa—as the engraving shows. Up its trunk a Cereus has reared itself, for some thirty feet at least ; a climbing Seguine[1] twines up it with leaves

[1] Philodendron.

like "lords and ladies:" but the glory of the tree is that climbing palm, the feathers of which we saw crowning it from a distance. Up into the highest branches and down again, and up again into the lower branches, and rolling along the ground in curves as that of a Boa bedecked with huge ferns and prickly spikes, six feet and more long each, the Rattan[1] hangs in mid-air, one hardly sees how, beautiful and wonderful, beyond what clumsy words can tell. Beneath the great trees (for here great trees grow freely beneath greater trees, and beneath greater trees again, delighting in the shade) is a group of young Mangosteens,[2] looking, to describe the unknown by the known, like walnuts with leaflets eight inches long, their boughs clustered with yellow and green sour fruit; and beyond them stretches up the lawn a dense grove of nutmegs, like Portugal laurels, hung about with olive-yellow apples. Here and there a nutmeg-apple has split, and shows within the delicate crimson caul of mace; or the nutmegs, the mace still clinging round them, lie scattered on the grass. Under the perpetual shade of the evergreens haunt Heliconias, and other delicate butterflies, who seem to dread the blaze outside, and flutter gently from leaf to leaf, their colouring—which

[1] Calamus Rotangi, from the East Indies.

[2] Garcinia Mangostana, from Malacca. The really luscious and famous variety has not yet fruited in Trinidad.

is usually black with markings of orange, crimson, or blue —coming into strongest contrast with the uniform green of leaf and grass. This is our favourite spot for entomologizing, when the sun outside altogether forbids the least exertion. Turn with us—alas! only in fancy—out of the grove into a neighbouring path, between tea-shrubs, looking like privets with large myrtle flowers, and young clove-trees, covered with the groups of green buds which are the cloves of commerce; and among fruit-trees from every part of the tropics, with the names of which I will not burden you. Glance at that beautiful and most poisonous shrub, which we found wild at St. Thomas's.[1] Glance, too—but, again, why burden you with names which you will not recollect, much more with descriptions which do not describe? Look, though, down that Allspice avenue, at the clear warm light which is reflected off the smooth yellow ever-peeling stems; and then, if you can fix your eye steadily on any object, where all are equally new and strange, look at this stately tree. A bough has been broken off high up, and from the wounded spot two plants are already contending. One is a parasitic Orchis; the other a parasite of a more dangerous family. It looks like a straggling Magnolia, some two feet high. In fifty years it will be a stately tree. Look at the single long straight air-root which

[1] Thevetia Nerriifolia.

it is letting down by the side of the tree bole. That root, if left, will be the destroyer of the whole tree. It will touch the earth, take root below, send out side-fibres above, call down younger roots to help it, till the whole bole, clasped and stifled in their embraces, dies, and rots out, and the Matapalo (or Scotch Attorney,[1] as it is rudely called here) stands alone on stilted roots, and board walls of young wood, slowly coalescing into one great trunk; master of the soil once owned by the patron on whose vitals he has fed: a treacherous tyrant; and yet, like many another treacherous tyrant, beautiful to see, with his shining evergreen foliage, and grand labyrinth of smooth roots, standing high in air, or dangling from the boughs in search of soil below; and last, but not least, his Magnolia-like flowers, rosy or snowy-white, and green egg-shaped fruits.

Now turn homewards, past the Rosa del monte[2] bush (bushes, you must recollect, are twenty feet high here), covered with crimson roses, full of long silky crimson stamens: and then try—as we do daily in vain—to recollect and arrange one-tenth of the things which you have seen.

One look round at the smaller wild animals and flowers. Butterflies swarm round us, of every hue. Beetles, you may remark, are few; they do not run in swarms about these arid paths as they do at home. But the wasps and bees, black

[1] Clusia. [2] Brownea.

and brown, are innumerable. That huge bee in steel-blue armour, booming straight at you—whom some one compared to the Lord Mayor's man in armour turned into a cherub, and broken loose—(Get out of his way, for he is absorbed in business)—is probably a wood-borer,[1] of whose work you may read in Mr. Wood's "Homes without Hands." That long black wasp, commonly called a Jack Spaniard, builds pensile paper nests under every roof and shed. Watch, now, this more delicate brown wasp, probably one of the Pelopœi of whom we have read in Mr. Gosse's "Naturalist in Jamaica," and Mr. Bates's "Travels on the Amazons." She has made under a shelf a mud nest of three long cells, and filled them one by one with small spiders, and the precious egg which, when hatched, is to feed on them. One hundred and eight spiders we have counted in a single nest like this; and the wasp, much of the same shape as the Jack Spaniard, but smaller, works, unlike him, alone, or at least only with her husband's help. The long mud nest is built upright, often in the angle of a doorpost or panel; and always added to, and entered from, below. With a joyful hum she flies back to it all day long with her pellets of mud, and spreads them out with her mouth into pointed arches, one laid on the other, making one side of the arch out of each pellet, and singing low but cheerily over her work. As she works downward,

[1] Xylocopa.

she parts off the tube of the nest with horizontal floors of a finer and harder mud, and inside each storey places some five spiders, and among them the precious egg, or eggs, which is to feed on them when hatched. If we open the uppermost chamber, we shall find every vestige of the spiders gone, and the cavity filled (and, strange to say, exactly filled) by a brown-coated wasp-pupa, enveloped in a fine silken shroud. In the chamber below, perhaps, we shall find the grub full-grown and finishing his last spider; and so on, down six or eight storeys, till the lowest holds nothing but spiders, packed close, but not yet sealed up. These spiders, be it remembered, are not dead. By some strange craft, the wasp knows exactly where to pierce them with her sting, so as to stupify, but not to kill, just as the sand-wasps of our banks at home stupify the large weevils which they store in their burrows as food for their grubs.

There are wasps too, here, who make pretty little jar-shaped nests, round, with a neatly lined round lip. Paper-nests, too, more like those of our tree-wasps at home, hang from the trees in the woods. Ants' nests, too, hang sometimes from the stronger boughs, looking like huge hard lumps of clay. And, once at least, we have found silken nests of butterflies or moths, containing many chrysalids each. Meanwhile, dismiss from your mind the stories of insect plagues. If good care is taken to close the mosquito cur-

tains at night, the flies about the house are not nearly as troublesome as we have often found the midges in Scotland. As for snakes, we have seen none ; centipedes are, certainly, apt to get into the bath, but can be fished out dead, and thrown to the chickens. The wasps and bees do not sting, or in any wise interfere with our comfort, save by building on the books. The only ants who come into the house are the minute, harmless, and most useful "crazy ants," who run up and down wildly all day, till they find some eatable thing, an atom of bread or a disabled cockroach, of which last, by the bye, we have seen hardly any here. They then prove themselves in their sound senses by uniting to carry off their prey, some pulling, some pushing, with a steady combination of effort which puts to shame an average negro crew. And these are all we have to fear, unless it be now and then a huge spider, which it is not the fashion here to kill, as they feed on flies. So comfort yourself with the thought that, as regards insect pests, we are quite as comfortable as in an English country house, and infinitely more comfortable than in a Scotch shooting lodge, let alone an Alpine châlet.

Lizards run about the walks in plenty, about the same size as the green lizard of the South of Europe, but of more sober colours. The parasol ants—of whom I could tell you much, save that you will read far more than I can tell you in half-

a-dozen books at home—walk in triumphal processions, each with a bit of green leaf borne over its head, and probably, when you look closely, with a little ant or two riding on it, and getting a lift home after work on their stronger sisters' back,—and these are all the monsters which you are likely to meet.

Would that there were more birds to be seen and heard! But of late years the free Negro, like the French peasant during the first half of this century, has held it to be one of the indefeasible rights of a free man to carry a rusty gun, and to shoot every winged thing. He has been tempted, too, by orders from London shops for gaudy birds—humming-birds especially. And when a single house, it is said, advertises for 20,000 bird-skins at a time, no wonder if birds grow scarce; and no wonder, too, if the wholesale destruction of these insect-killers should avenge itself by a plague of vermin, caterpillars, and grubs innumerable. Already the turf of the Savannah or public park, close by, is being destroyed by hordes of mole-crickets, strange to say, almost exactly like those of our old English meadows; and unless something is done to save the birds, the cane and other crops will surely suffer in their turn. A gun-licence would be, it seems, both unpopular and easily evaded in a wild forest country. A heavy export tax on bird-skins has been proposed. May it soon be laid on, and the vegetable wealth of the island saved,

at the expense of a little less useless finery in young ladies' hats.

So we shall see and hear but few birds round Port of Spain, save the black vultures[1]—Corbeaux, as they call them here; and the black "tick birds,"[2] a little larger than our English blackbird, with a long tail and a thick-hooked bill, who perform for the cattle here the same friendly office as is performed by starlings at home. Privileged creatures, they cluster about on rails and shrubs within ten feet of the passer, while overhead in the tree-tops the "Qu'est ce qu'il dit,"[3] a brown and yellow bird, who seems almost equally privileged and insolent, inquires perpetually what you say. Besides these, swallows of various kinds, little wrens,[4] almost exactly like our English ones, and night-hawking goat-suckers, few birds are seen. But, unseen, in the depths of every wood, a songster breaks out ever and anon in notes equal for purity and liveliness to those of our English thrush, and belies the vulgar calumny that tropic birds, lest they should grow too proud of their gay feathers, are denied the gift of song.

One look, lastly, at the animals which live, either in cages or at liberty, about the house. The queen of all the pets is a black and grey spider monkey[5] from Guiana—con-

[1] Cathartes Urubu. [2] Crotophaga Ani. [3] Lanius Pitanga.
[4] Troglodytes Eudon. [5] Ateles (undescribed species).

sisting of a tail which has developed, at one end, a body about twice as big as a hare's; four arms (call them not legs), of which the front ones have no thumbs, nor rudiments of thumbs; and a head of black hair, brushed forward over the foolish, kindly, greedy, sad face, with its wide, suspicious, beseeching eyes, and mouth which, as in all these American monkeys, as far as we have seen, can have no expression, not even that of sensuality, because it has no lips. Others have described the spider monkey as four legs and a tail, tied in a knot in the middle: but the tail is, without doubt, the most important of the five limbs. Wherever the monkey goes, whatever she does, the tail is the standing-point, or rather hanging-point. It takes one turn at least round something or other, provisionally, and in case it should be wanted; often, as she swings, every other limb hangs in the most ridiculous repose, and the tail alone supports. Sometimes it carries, by way of ornament, a bunch of flowers or a live kitten. Sometimes it is curled round the neck, or carried over the head in the hands, out of harm's way; or when she comes silently up behind you, puts her cold hand in yours, and walks by your side like a child, she steadies herself by taking a half-turn of her tail round your wrist. Her relative Jack, of whom hereafter, walks about carrying his chain, to ease his neck, in a loop of his tail. The spider monkey's easiest attitude in walking, and in running

also, is, strangely, upright, like a human being: but as for her antics, nothing could represent them to you, save a series of photographs, and those instantaneous ones; for they change, every moment, not by starts, but with a deliberate ease which would be grace in anything less horribly ugly, into postures such as Callot or Breughel never fancied for the ugliest imps who ever tormented St. Anthony. All absurd efforts of agility which you ever saw at a séance of the Hylobates Lar Club at Cambridge are quiet and clumsy compared to the rope-dancing which goes on in the boughs of the Poui tree, or, to their great detriment, of the Bougainvillea and the Gardenia on the lawn. But with all this, Spider is the gentlest, most obedient, and most domestic of beasts. Her creed is, that yellow bananas are the summum bonum; and that she must not come into the dining-room, or even into the verandah; whither, nevertheless, she slips, in fear and trembling, every morning, to steal the little green parrot's breakfast out of his cage, or the baby's milk, or fruit off the side-board; in which case she makes her appearance suddenly and silently, sitting on the threshold like a distorted fiend; and begins scratching herself, looking at everything except the fruit, and pretending total absence of mind, till the proper moment comes for unwinding her lengthy ugliness, and making a snatch at the table. Poor weak-headed thing, full of foolish

cunning; always doing wrong, and knowing that it is wrong, but quite unable to resist temptation; and then profuse in futile explanations, gesticulations, mouthings of an "Oh!—oh!—oh!" so pitiably human, that you can only punish her by laughing at her, which she does not at all like. One cannot resist the fancy, while watching her, either that she was once a human being, or that she is trying to become one. But, at present, she has more than one habit to learn, or to recollect, ere she become as fit for human society as the dog or the cat.[1] Her friends are, every human being who will take notice of her, and a beautiful little Guazupita, or native deer, a little larger than a roe, with great black melting eyes, and a heart as soft as its eyes, who comes to lick one's hand; believes in bananas as firmly as the monkey; and when she can get no hand to lick, licks the hairy monkey for mere love's sake, and lets it ride on her back, and kicks it off, and lets it get on again and take a half-turn of its tail round her neck, and throttle her with its arms, and pull her nose out of the way when a banana is coming: and all out of pure love; for the two have never been introduced to each other by man; and the intimacy between them, like that famous one between the horse and the hen, is of Nature's own making up.

[1] Alas for Spider! She came to the Zoological Gardens last summer, only to die pitifully.

Very different from the spider monkey in temper is her cousin Jack, who sits, sullen and unrepentant, at the end of a long chain, having an ugly liking for the calves of passers-by, and ugly teeth to employ on them. Sad at heart he is, and testifies his sadness sometimes by standing bolt upright, with his long arms in postures oratoric, almost prophetic, or, when duly pitied and moaned to, lying down on his side, covering his hairy eyes with one hairy arm, and weeping and sobbing bitterly. He seems, speaking scientifically, to be some sort of Mycetes or Howler, from the flat globular throat, which indicates the great development of the hyoid bone; but, happily for the sleep of the neighbourhood, he never utters in captivity any sound beyond a chuckle; and he is supposed, by some here, from his burly thick-set figure, vast breadth between the ears, short neck, and general cast of countenance, to have been, in a prior state of existence, a man and a brother—and that by no means of Negro blood—who has gained, in this his purgatorial stage of existence, nothing save a well-earned tail. At all events, more than one of us was impressed, at the first sight, with the conviction that we had seen him before.

Poor Jack! and it is come to this: and all from the indulgence of his five senses, plus "the sixth sense of vanity." His only recreation save eating is being led about by the Mulatto turnkey, the one human being with whom he, dimly

understanding what is fit for him, will at all consort; and having wild pines thrown down to him from the Poui tree above, by the spider monkey, whose gambols he watches with pardonable envy. Like the great Mr. Barry Lyndon (the acutest sketch of human nature dear Thackeray ever made), he cannot understand why the world is so unjust and foolish as to have taken a prejudice against him. After all, he is nothing but a strong nasty brute; and his only reason for being here is that he is a new and undescribed species, never seen before, and, it is to be hoped, never to be seen again.

In a cage near by (for there is quite a little menagerie here) are three small Sapajous,[1] two of which belong to the island; as abject and selfish as monkeys usually are, and as uninteresting; save for the plain signs which they give of being actuated by more than instinct,—by a "reasoning" power exactly like in kind, though not equal in degree, to that of man. If, as people are now too much induced to believe, the brain makes the man, and not some higher Reason connected intimately with the Moral Sense, which will endure after the brain has turned to dust; if to foresee consequences from experience, and to adapt means to ends, be the highest efforts of the intellect: then who can deny that the Sapajou proves himself a man and a brother, plus a tail, when he puts out a lighted cigar-end before he chews it, by dipping it into

[1] Cebus.

the water-pan; and that he may, therefore, by long and steady calculations about the conveniences of virtue and inconveniences of vice, gradually cure himself and his children of those evil passions which are defined as "the works of the flesh," and rise to the supremest heights of justice, benevolence, and purity? We, who have been brought up in an older, and as we were taught to think, a more rational creed, may not be able yet to allow our imaginations so daringly hopeful a range: but the world travels fast, and seems travelling on into some such theory just now; leaving behind, as antiquated bigots, those who dare still to believe in the eternal and immutable essence of Goodness, and in the divine origin of man, created in the likeness of God, that he might be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect.

But to return to the animals. The cage next to the monkeys holds a more pleasant beast; a Toucan out of the primæval forest, as gorgeous in colour as he is ridiculous in shape. His general plumage is black, set off by a snow-white gorget fringed with crimson; crimson and green tail coverts, and a crimson and green beak, with blue cere about his face and throat. His enormous and weak bill seems made for the purpose of swallowing bananas whole; how he feeds himself with it in the forest it is difficult to guess: and when he hops up and down on his great clattering feet—two toes turned forward, and two back—twisting head and

beak right and left (for he cannot see well straight before him) to see whence the bananas are coming; or when again, after gorging a couple, he sits gulping and winking, digesting them in serene satisfaction, he is as good a specimen as can be seen of the ludicrous—dare I say the intentionally ludicrous?—element in nature.

Next to him is a Kinkajou;[1] a beautiful little furry bear—or racoon—who has found it necessary for his welfare in this world of trees, to grow a long prehensile tail, as the monkeys of the New World have done. He sleeps by day; save when woke up to eat a banana, or to scoop the inside out of an egg with his long lithe tongue: but by night he remembers his forest-life, and performs strange dances by the hour together, availing himself not only of his tail, which he uses just as the spider monkey does, but of his hind feet, which he can turn completely round at will, till the claws point forward like like those of a bat. But with him, too, the tail is the sheet-anchor, by which he can hold on, and bring all his four feet to bear on his food. So it is with the little Anteater,[2] who must needs climb here, to feed on the tree ants. So it is, too, with the Tree Porcupine,[3] or Coendou, who (in strange contrast to the well-known classic Porcupine of the rocks of Southern

[1] Cercoleptes.

[2] Myrmecophaga Didactyla. I owe to the pencil of a gifted lady this sketch of the animal in repose, which is as perfect as it is, I believe, unique.

[3] Synetheres.

Europe) climbs trees after leaves, and swings about like the monkeys. For the life of animals in the primæval forest is,

The Little Ant-eater.

as one glance would show you, principally arboreal. The flowers, the birds, the insects, are all a hundred feet over

your head as you walk along in the all but lifeless shade; and half an hour therein would make you feel how true was Mr. Wallace's simile—that a walk in the tropic forest was like one in an empty cathedral while the service was being celebrated upon the roof.

In the next two cages, however, are animals who need no prehensile tails; for they are cats, furnished with those far more useful and potent engines, retractile claws; a form of beast at which the thoughtful man will never look without wonder; so unique, so strange, and yet so perfect, that it suits every circumstance of every clime: as does that equally unique form the dragon-fly. We found the dragon-flies here, to our surprise, exactly similar to, and as abundant as, the dragon-flies at home; and, remembering that there were dragon-flies of exactly the same type ages and ages ago, in the days of the Œningen and Solenhofen slates, said—Here is indeed a perfect work of God, which, as far as man can see, has needed no improvement (if such an expression be allowable) throughout epochs in which the whole shape of continents and seas, and the whole climate of the planet, has changed again and again. The cats are: an ocelot, a beautiful spotted and striped fiend, who hisses like a snake; a young jaguar, a clumsy, happy kitten, about as big as a pug dog, with a puny kitten's tail, who plays with the spider monkey, and only shows by the fast-increasing bulk of his square lumbering head, that in six

months he will be ready to eat the monkey, and in twelve to eat the keeper.

There are strange birds, too. One, whom you may see in the Zoological Gardens, like a plover with a straight beak and bittern's plumage, from "The Main," whose business is to walk about the table at meals uttering sad metallic noises and catching flies. His name is Sun-bird,[1] "Sun-fowlo" of the Surinam Negros, according to dear old Stedman, "because, when it extends its wings, which it often does, there appears on the interior part of each wing a most beautiful representation of a sun. This bird," he continues very truly, "might be styled the perpetual motion, its body making a continual movement, and its tail keeping time like the pendulum of a clock."[2] A game-bird, olive, with a bare red throat, also from The Main, called a Chacaracha,[3] who is impudently brave, and considers the house his own; and a great black Curassow,[4] also from The Main, who patronizes the turkeys and guinea-fowl; stalks in dignity before them; and when they do not obey, enforces his authority by pecking them to death. There is thus plenty of amusement here, and instruction too,

[1] Helias Eurypyga.

[2] Stedman's Surinam, vol. i. p. 118. What a genius was Stedman. What an eye and what a pen he had for all natural objects. His denunciations of the brutalities of old Dutch slavery are full of genuine eloquence and of sound sense likewise; and the loves of Stedman and his brown Joanna are one of the sweetest idylls in the English tongue.

[3] Penelope (?).

[4] Crax.

for those to whom the ways of dumb animals during life are more interesting than their stuffed skins after death.

But there is the signal-gun, announcing the arrival of the Mail from home. And till it departs again there will be no time to add to this hasty, but not unfaithful, sketch of first impressions in a tropic island.

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CHAPTER VI.

MONOS.

EARLY in January, I started with my host and his little suite on an expedition to the islands of the Bocas. Our object was twofold: to see tropical coast scenery, and to get, if possible, some Guacharo birds (pronounced Huáchăro), of whom more hereafter. Our chance of getting them depended on the sea being calm outside the Bocas, as well as inside. The calm inside was no proof of the calm out. Port of Spain is under the lee of the mountains; and the surf might be thundering along the northern shore, tearing out stone after stone from the soft cliffs, and shrouding all the distant points in salt haze, though the gulf along which we were rowing was perfectly smooth, and the shipping and the mangrove scrub and the coco-palms hung double, reflected as in a mirror, not of glass but of mud; and on the swamps of the Caroni the malarious fog hung motionless in long straight lines, waiting for the first blaze of sunrise to sublime it and its invisible poisons into

the upper air, where it would be swept off, harmless, by the trade-wind which rushed along half a mile above our heads.

So away we rowed, or rather were rowed by four stalwart Negros, along the northern shore of the gulf, while the sun leapt up straight astern, and made the awning, or rather the curtains of the awning, needful enough. For the perpendicular rays of the sun in the tropics are not so much dreaded as the horizontal ones, which strike on the forehead, or, still more dangerous, on the back of the head; and in the West Indies, as in the United States, the early morning and the latter part of the afternoon are the times for sunstrokes. Some sort of shade for the back of the head is necessary for an European, unless (which is not altogether to be recommended) he adopts the La Platan fashion of wearing the natural, and therefore surest, sunshade of his own hair hanging down to his shoulders after the manner of our old cavaliers.

The first islands which we made—The Five Islands, as they are called—are curious enough. Isolated remnants of lime-stone, the biggest perhaps one hundred yards long by one hundred feet high, channelled and honeycombed into strange shapes by rain and waves, they are covered—that at least on which we landed — almost exclusively by Matapalos, which seem to have strangled the original trees and established themselves in every cranny of the rocks, sending out arms, legs, fingers, ropes, pillars, and what-not, of live holdfasts over

every rock and over each other, till little but the ubiquitous Seguine [1] and Pinguins [2] find room or sustenance among them. The island on which we landed is used, from time to time, as a depôt for Coolie immigrants when first landed. There they remain to rest after the voyage, till they can be apportioned by the Government officers to the estates which need them. Of this admirable system of satisfying the great need of the West Indies, free labourers, I may be allowed to say a little here.

"Immigrants" are brought over from Hindostan at the expense of the colony. The Indian Government jealously watches the emigration, and through agents of its own rigidly tests the bonâ fide "voluntary" character of the engagement. That they are well treated on the voyage is sufficiently proved, that on 2,264 souls imported last year the death-rate during the voyage was only 2·7 per cent., although cholera attacked the crew of one of the ships before it left the Hooghly. During the last three years ships with over 300 emigrants have arrived several times in Trinidad without a single death. On their arrival in Trinidad, those who are sick are sent at once to the hospital; those unfit for immediate labour are sent to the depôt. The healthy are "indentured"—in plain English, apprenticed—for five years, and distributed among the estates which have applied for them.

[1] Philodendron. [2] Bromelia.

Husbands and wives are not allowed to be separated, nor are children under fifteen parted from their parents or natural protectors. They are expected by the law to work for 280 days in the year, nine hours a day; and receive the same wages as the free labourers: but for this system task-work is by consent universally substituted; and (as in the case of an English apprentice) the law, by various provisions, at once punishes them for wilful idleness, and protects them from tyranny or fraud on the part of their employers. Till the last two years the new comers received their wages entirely in money. But it was found better to give them for the first year (and now for the two first years) part payment in daily rations: a pound of rice, 4 oz. of dholl, a kind of pea, an oz. of coco-nut oil, or ghee, and 2 oz. of sugar to each adult; and half the same to each child between five and ten years old.

This plan has been found necessary, in order to protect the Coolies both from themselves and from each other. They themselves prefer receiving the whole of their wages in cash. With that fondness for mere hard money, which marks a half educated Oriental, they will, as a rule, hoard their wages; and stint themselves of food, injuring their powers of work, and even endangering their own lives; as is proved by the broad fact that the death-rate among them has much decreased, especially during the first year of residence, since the plan of giving them rations has been at work. The new

comers need, too, protection from their own countrymen. Old Coolies who have served their time and saved money find it convenient to turn rice-sellers or money lenders. They have powerful connections on many estates; they first advance money or luxuries to a new comer, and when he is once entrapped, they sell him the necessaries of life at famine prices. Thus the practical effect of rations has been to lessen the number of those little roadside shops, which were a curse to Trinidad, and are still a curse to the English workman. Moreover—for all men are not perfect, even in Trinidad—the Coolie required protection, in certain cases, against a covetous and short-sighted employer, who might fancy it to be his interest to let the man idle during his first year, while weak, and so save up an arrear of "lost days" to be added at the end of the five years, when he was a strong skilled labourer. An employer will have, of course, far less temptation to do this, while, as now, he is bound to feed the Coolie for the first two years. Meanwhile, be it remembered, the very fact that such a policy was tempting, goes to prove that the average Coolie grew, during his five years' apprenticeship, a stronger, and not a weaker, man.

There is thorough provision—as far as the law can provide—for the Coolies in case of sickness. No estate is allowed to employ indentured Coolies, which has not a duly "certified" Hospital, capable of holding $\frac{1}{10}$ at least of the Coolies on

the estate, with an allowance of 800 cubic feet to each person; and these hospitals are under the care of district medical visitors, appointed by the Governor, and under the inspection (as are the labour-books, indeed every document and arrangement connected with the Coolies) of the Agent-general of Immigrants or his deputies. One of these officers, the Inspector, is always on the move, and daily visits, without warning, one or more estates, reporting every week to the Agent-general. The Governor may at any time, without assigning any cause, cancel the indenture of any immigrant, or remove any part or the whole of the indentured immigrant labourers from any estate; and this has been done ere now.

I know but too well, that, whether in Europe or in the Indies, no mere laws, however wisely devised, will fully protect the employed from the employer: or, again, the employer from the employed. What is needed is a moral bond between them; a bond above, or rather beneath, that of mere wages, however fairly paid, for work, however fairly done. The patriarchal system had such a bond; so had the feudal: but they are both dead and gone, having done, I presume, all that it was in them to do, and done it like all human institutions not over well. And meanwhile, that nobler bond, after which Socialists so-called have sought, and after which I trust they will go on seeking still—a bond which shall combine all that was best in patriarchism and feudalism, with that

freedom of the employed, which those forms of society failed to give—has not been found as yet; and, for a generation or two to come, "cash-payment seems likely to be the only nexus between man and man." Because that is the meanest and weakest of all bonds, it must be watched jealously and severely by any government worthy of the name; for to leave it to be taken care of by the mere brute tendencies of supply and demand, and the so-called necessities of the labour market, is simply to leave the poor man who cannot wait, to be blockaded and starved out by the rich who can. Therefore all colonial governments are but doing their plain duty in keeping a clear eye, and a strong hand, on this whole immigration movement; and in fencing it round, as in Trinidad, with such regulations as shall make it most difficult for a Coolie to be seriously or permanently wronged without direct infraction of the law, and connivance of government officers; which last supposition is, in the case of Trinidad, absurd, as long as Dr. Mitchell, whom I am proud to call my friend, holds a post for which he is equally fitted by his talents and his virtues.

I am well aware that some benevolent persons, to whom humanity owes much, regard Coolie immigration to the West Indies with some jealousy, fearing, and not unnaturally, that it may degenerate into a sort of slave-trade. I think, that if they will study the last immigration ordinance enacted by the

Governor of Trinidad, June 24, 1870, and the report of the Agent-general of Immigrants for the year ending Sept. 30, 1869, their fears will be set at rest as far as this colony is concerned. Of other colonies I say nothing, simply because I know nothing: save that, if there are defects and abuses elsewhere, the remedy is simple: namely, to adopt the system of Trinidad, and work it as it is worked there.

Coolies a-field.

After he has served his five years' apprenticeship, the Coolie has two courses before him. Either he can re-indenture himself to an employer, for not more than twelve months, which as a rule he does; or he can seek employment where he likes. At the end of a continuous residence of ten years

in all, and at any period after that, he is entitled to a free passage back to Hindostan; or he may exchange his right to a free passage for a government grant of ten acres of land. He has meanwhile, if he has been thrifty, grown rich. His wife walks about, at least on high-days, bedizened with jewels: nay, you may see her, even on work-days, hoeing in the cane-piece with heavy silver bangles hanging down over her little brown feet: and what wealth she does not carry on her arms, ancles, neck, and nostril, her husband has in the savings' bank. The ship Arima, as an instance, took back 320 Coolies last year, of whom seven died on the voyage. These people carried with them 65,585 dollars; and one man, Heerah, handed over 6,000 dollars for transmission through the Treasury, and was known to have about him 4,000 more. This man, originally allotted to an estate, had, after serving out his industrial contract, resided in the neighbouring village of Savannah Grande as a shopkeeper and money-lender for the last ten years. Most of this money, doubtless, had been squeezed out of other Coolies by means not unknown to Europeans, as well as to Hindoos: but it must have been there to be squeezed out. And the new "feeding ordinance" will, it is to be hoped, pare the claws of Hindoo and Chinese usurers.

The newly offered grant of Government land has, as yet, been accepted only in a few cases. "It was not to be expected," says the report, "that the Indian, whose habits have been

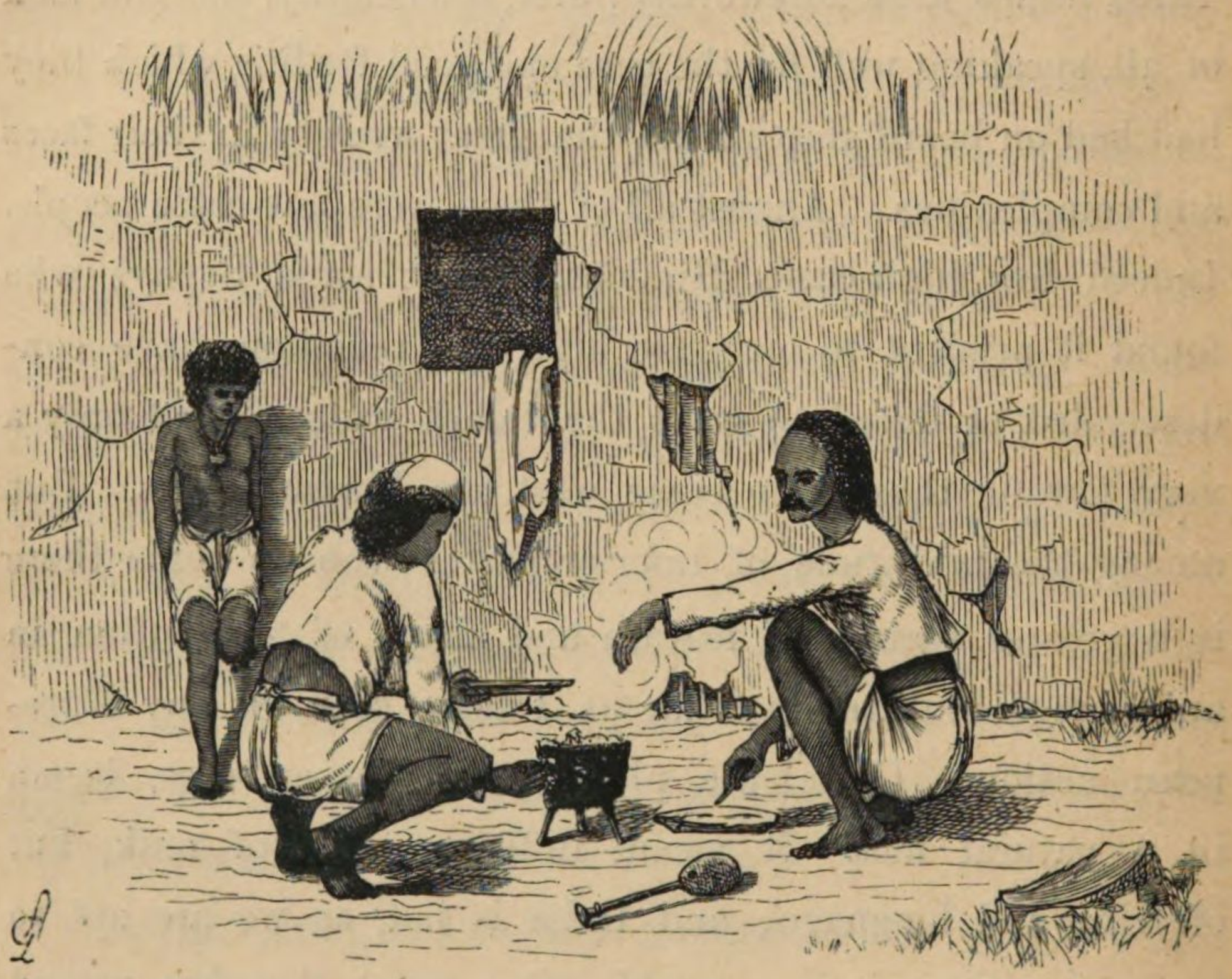
fixed in special grooves for tens of centuries, should hurriedly embrace an offer which must strike at all his prejudices of country, and creed, and kin." Still, about 60 had settled in 1869 near the estates in Savonetta, where I saw them, and at Point à Pierre; other settlements have been made since, of which more hereafter. And, as a significant fact, many Coolies who have returned to India, are now coming back a second time to Trinidad, bringing their kinsfolk and fellow villagers with them, to a land where violence is unknown, and famine impossible. Moreover, numerous Coolies from the French Islands are now immigrating, and buying land. These are chiefly Madrassees, who are, it is said, stronger and healthier than the Calcutta Coolies. In any case, there seems good hope that a race of Hindoo peasant-proprietors will spring up in the colony, whose voluntary labour will be available at crop-time; and who will teach the Negro thrift and industry, not only by their example, but by competing against him in the till lately understocked labour-market.

Very interesting was the first glimpse of Hindoos; and still more of Hindoos in the West Indies—the surplus of one of the oldest civilizations of the old world, come hither to replenish the new; novel was the sight of the dusky limbs swarming up and down among the rocks beneath the Mata-palo shade; the group in the water as we landed, bathing and dressing themselves at the same time, after the modest and

graceful Hindoo fashion; the visit to the wooden barracks, where a row of men was ranged on one side of the room, with their women and children on the other, having their name, caste, native village, and so forth, taken down before they were sent off to the estates to which they were indentured. Three things were noteworthy; first, the healthy, cheerful look of all, speaking well for the care and good feeding which they had had on board ship; next, the great variety in their faces and complexions. Almost all of them were low-caste people. Indeed few high-caste Hindoos, except some Sepoys who found it prudent to emigrate after the rebellion, have condescended, or dared, to cross the "dark water;" and only a very few of those who come west are Mussulmauns. But among the multitude of inferior castes who do come there is a greater variety of feature and shape of skull than in an average multitude, as far as I have seen, of any European nation. Caste, the physiognomist soon sees, began in a natural fact. It meant difference, not of rank, but of tribe and language; and India is not, as we are apt to fancy, a nation: it is a world. One must therefore regard this emigration of the Coolies, like anything else which tends to break down caste, as a probable step forward in their civilization. For it must tend to undermine in them, and still more in their children, the petty superstitions of old tribal distinctions; and must force them to take their stand on

wider and sounder ground, and see that "a man's a man for a' that."

The third thing noteworthy in the crowd, which cooked, chatted, lounged, sauntered idly to and fro under the Mata-palos—the pillared air-roots of which must have put them in



Coolies cooking.

mind of their own Banyans at home—was their good manners. One saw in a moment that one was among gentlemen and ladies. The dress of many of the men was nought but a scarf wrapped round the loins; that of most of the women

naught but the longer scarf which the Hindoo woman contrives to arrange in a most graceful, as well as a perfectly modest covering, even for her feet and head. These garments, and perhaps a brass pot, were probably all the worldly goods of most of them just then. But every attitude, gesture, tone, was full of grace; of ease, courtesy, self-restraint, dignity—of that "sweetness and light," at least in externals, which Mr. Matthew Arnold desiderates. I am well aware that these people are not perfect; that like most heathen folk and some Christian, their morals are by no means spotless, their passions by no means trampled out. But they have acquired—let Hindoo scholars tell how and where—a civilization which shows in them all day long; which draws the European to them and them to the European, whenever the latter is worthy of the name of a civilized man, instinctively, and by the mere interchange of glances; a civilization which must make it easy for the Englishman, if he will but do his duty, not only to make use of these people, but to purify and ennoble them.

Another thing was noteworthy about the Coolies, at the very first glance, and all we saw afterwards proved that that first glance was correct; I mean their fondness for children. If you took notice of a child, not only the mother smiled thanks and delight, but the men around likewise, as if a compliment had been paid to their whole company. We saw afterwards almost daily proofs of the Coolie men's fondness

for their children; of their fondness also—an excellent sign that the morale is not destroyed at the root—for dumb animals. A Coolie cow or donkey is petted, led about tenderly, tempted with tit-bits. Pet animals, where they can be got, are the Coolie's delight, as they are the delight of the wild Indian. I wish I could say the same of the Negro. His treatment of his children and of his beasts of burden is, but too often, as exactly opposed to that of the Coolie as are his manners. No wonder that the two races do not, and it is to be feared never will, amalgamate; that the Coolie, shocked by the unfortunate awkwardness of gesture, and vulgarity of manners of the average Negro, and still more of the Negress, looks on them as savages; while the Negro, in his turn, hates the Coolie as a hard-working interloper, and despises him as a heathen; or that heavy fights between the two races arise now and then, in which the Coolie, in spite of his slender limbs, has generally the advantage over the burly Negro, by dint of his greater courage, and the terrible quickness with which he wields his beloved weapon, the long hard-wood quarterstaff.

But to return: we rowed away with a hundred confused, but most pleasant new impressions, amid innumerable salaams to the Governor by these kindly courteous people, and then passed between the larger limestone islands into the roadstead of Chaguaramas, which ought to be, and some day may be, the

harbour for the British West India fleet; and for the shipping, too, of that commerce which, as Humboldt prophesied, must some day spring up between Europe and the boundless wealth of the Upper Orinoco, as yet lying waste. Already gold discoveries in the Sierra de Parima (of which more hereafter) are indicating the honesty of poor murdered Raleigh. Already the good President of Ciudad Bolivar (Angostura) has disbanded the ruffian army, which is the usual curse of a Spanish American republic, and has inaugurated, it is to be hoped, a reign of peace and commerce. Already an American line of steamers runs as far as Nutrias, some eight hundred miles up the Orinoco and Apure; while a second will soon run up the Meta, almost to Santa Fé de Bogotá, and bring down the Orinoco the wealth, not only of Southern Venezuela, but of central New Grenada; and then a day may come when the admirable harbour of Chaguaramas may be one of the entrepôts of the world; if a certain swamp to windward, which now makes the place pestilential, could but be drained. The usual method of so doing now, is to lay the swamp as dry as possible by open ditches, and then plant it with coco-nuts, whose roots have some mysterious power both of drying and purifying the soil; but were Chaguaramas ever needed as an entrepôt, it would not be worth while to wait for coco-nuts to grow. A dyke across the mouth, and a steam-pump on it, as in the fens of Norfolk and of Guiana, to throw the land-water

over into the sea, would probably expel the evil spirit of malaria at once and for ever.

We rowed on past the Boca de Monos, by which we had entered the gulf at first, and looked out eagerly enough for sharks, which are said to swarm at Chaguaramas. But no warning fin appeared above the ripple; only, more than once, close to the stern of the boat, a heavy fish broke water with a sharp splash and swirl, which was said to be a Barracouta, following us up in mere bold curiosity, but perfectly ready to have attacked any one who fell overboard. These barracoutas—Sphyrænas as the learned, or "pike" as the sailors, call them, though they are no kin to our pike at home—are when large, nearly as dangerous as a shark. In some parts of the West Indies, folk dare not bathe for fear of them; for they lie close in shore, amid the heaviest surf; and woe to any living thing which they come across. Moreover, they have this somewhat mean advantage over you, that while, if they eat you, you will agree with them perfectly, you cannot eat them, at least at certain or uncertain seasons of the year, without their disagreeing with you, without sickness, trembling pains in all joints, falling off of nails and hair for years to come, and possible death. Those who may wish to know more of the poisonous fishes of the West Indies, may profitably consult a paper in the proceedings of the Scientific Association of Trinidad, by that admirable naturalist, and—let

me say of him (though I have not the honour of knowing him) what has long been said by all who have that honour—admirable man, the Hon. Richard Hill of Jamaica. He mentions some thirteen species which are more or less poisonous, at all events at times: but on the cause of their unwholesomeness he throws little light; and still less on the extraordinary, but undoubted fact that the same species may be poisonous in one island, and harmless in another; and that of two species so close as to be often considered as the same, one may be poisonous, the other harmless. The yellow-billed sprat,[1] for instance, is usually so poisonous that "death has occurred from eating it in many cases immediately, and in some recorded instances even before the fish was swallowed." Yet a species caught with this, and only differing from it (if indeed it be distinct) by having a yellow spot, instead of a black one, on the gill-cover, is harmless. Mr. Hill attributes the poisonous quality, in many cases, to the foul food which the fish get from coral reefs, such as the Formigas bank, midway between Cuba, Hayti, and Jamaica, where, as you "approach it from the east, you find the cheering blandness of the sea-breeze suddenly changing to the nauseating smell of a fish-market." There, as off similar reefs in the Bahamas and round Anegada, as well as at one end of St. Kitts, the fish are said to be all poisonous. If this theory be correct, the absence of coral

[1] Alosa Bishopi.

reefs round Trinidad may help to account for the fact stated by Mr. Joseph, that poisonous fish are unknown in that island. The statement, however, is somewhat too broadly made; for the Chouf-chouf,[1] a prickly fish which blows itself out like a bladder, and which may be seen hanging in many a sailor's cottage in England, is as evil-disposed in Trinidad as elsewhere. The very vultures will not eat it; and while I was in the island a family of Coolies, in spite of warning, contrived to kill themselves with the nasty vermin: the only one who had wit enough to refuse it being an idiot boy.

These islands of the Bocas, three in number, are some two miles long each, and some eight hundred to one thousand feet in height; at least, so say the surveyors. To the eye, as is usual in the Tropics, they look much lower. One is inclined here to estimate hills at half, or less than half, their actual height; and that from causes simple enough. Not only does the intense clearness of the atmosphere make the summits appear much nearer than in England; but the trees on the summit increase the deception. The mind, from home association, supposes them to be of the same height as average English trees on a hill-top—say fifty feet—and estimates, rapidly and unconsciously, the height of the mountain by that standard. The trees are actually nearer a hundred and fifty than fifty

[1] Tetraodon.

feet high; and the mountain is two or three times as big as it looks.

But it is not their height, nor the beauty of their outline, nor the size of the trunks which still linger on them here and there, which give these islands their special charm. It is their exquisite little land-locked southern coves—places to live and die in—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

Take as an example that into which we rowed that day in Monos, as the old Spaniards named it, from monkeys long since extinct; a curved shingle beach some fifty yards across, shut in right and left by steep rocks wooded down almost to the sea, and worn into black caves and crannies, festooned with the night-blowing Cereus, which crawls about with hairy green legs, like a tangle of giant spiders. Among it, in the cracks, upright Cerei, like candelabra twenty and thirty feet high, thrust themselves aloft into the brushwood. An Aroid[1] rides parasitic on roots and stems, sending downward long air-roots, and upward brown rat-tails of flower, and broad leaves, four feet by two, which wither into whitey-brown paper, and are used, being tough and fibrous, to wrap round the rowlocks of the oars. Tufts of Karatas, too, spread their long prickly leaves among the bush of

[1] Anthurium Huegelii?—Grisebach, "Flora of the West Indies."

"rastrajo," or second growth after the primæval forest has been cleared, which dips suddenly right and left to the beach. It, and the little strip of flat ground behind it, hold a three-roomed cottage—of course on stilts; a shed which serves as a kitchen; a third ruined building, which is tenanted mostly by lizards and creeping flowers; some twenty or thirty coco-nut trees; and on the very edge of the sea an almond-tree, its roots built up to seaward with great stones, its trunk hung with fishing lines; and around it, scattered on the shingle, strange shells, bits of coral, coco-nuts and their fragments; almonds from the tree; the round scaly fruit of the Mauritia palm, which has probably floated across the gulf from the forests of the Orinoco or the Caroni; and the long seeds of the mangrove, in shape like a roach-fisher's float, and already germinating, their leaves showing at the upper end, a tiny root at the lower. In that shingle they will not take root: but they are quite ready to go to sea again next tide, and wander on for weeks, and for hundreds of miles, till they run ashore at last on a congenial bed of mud, throw out spider legs right and left, and hide the foul mire with their gay green leaves.

The almond tree,[1] with its flat stages of large smooth leaves, and oily eatable seeds in an almond-like husk, is not an almond at all, or any kin thereto. It has been named, as so many West Indian plants have, after some known plant to

[1] Terminalia Catappa.

which it bore a likeness, and introduced hither, and indeed to all shores from Cuba to Guiana, from the East Indies, through Arabia and tropical Africa, having begun its westward journey, probably, in the pocket of some Portuguese follower of Vasco de Gama.

We beached the boat close to the almond-tree, and were welcomed on shore by the lord of the cove, a gallant red-bearded Scotsman, with a head and a heart; a handsome Creole wife, and lovely brownish children, with no more clothes on than they could help. An old sailor, and much-wandering Ulysses, he is now coast-guardman, water-bailiff, policeman, practical warden, and indeed practical viceroy of the island, and an easy life of it he must have.

The sea gives him fish enough for his family, and for a brawny brown servant. His coco-nut palms yield him a little revenue; he has poultry, kids, and goats' milk more than he needs; his patch of provision-ground in the place gives him corn and roots, sweet potatoes, yam, tania, cassava, and fruit, too, all the year round. He needs nothing, owes nothing, fears nothing. News and politics are to him like the distant murmur of the surf at the back of the island; a noise which is nought to him. His Bible, his almanac, and three or four old books on a shelf, are his whole library. He has all that man needs, more than man deserves, and is far too wise to wish to better himself.

I sat down on the beach beneath the amber shade of the palms; and watched my white friends rushing into the clear sea, and disporting themselves there like so many otters, while the policeman's little boy launched a log canoe, not much longer than himself, and paddled out into the midst of them, and then jumped upright in it, a little naked brown Cupidon; whereon he and his canoe were of course upset, and pushed under water, and scrambled over, and the whole cove rang with shouts and splashing, enough to scare away the boldest shark, had one been on watch off the point. I looked at the natural beauty and repose; at the human vigour and happiness: and I said to myself, and said it often afterwards in the West Indies: Why do not other people copy this wise Scot? Why should not many a young couple, who have education, refinement, resources in themselves, but are, happily or unhappily for them, unable to keep a brougham and go to London balls, retreat to some such paradise as this (and there are hundreds like it to be found in the West Indies), leaving behind them false civilisation, and vain desires, and useless show; and there live in simplicity and content "The Gentle Life"? It is not true that the climate is too enervating. It is not true that nature is here too strong for man. I have seen enough in Trinidad, I saw enough even in little Monos, to be able to deny that; and to say, that in the West Indies, as elsewhere, a young man can be pure, able,

high-minded, industrious, athletic: and I see no reason why a woman should not be likewise all that she need be.

A cultivated man and wife, with a few hundreds a year—just enough, in fact, to enable them to keep a coolie servant or two, might be really wealthy in all which constitutes true wealth; and might be useful also in their place; for each such couple would be a little centre of civilization for the Negro, the Coolie; and it may be for certain young adventurers who, coming out merely to make money and return as soon as possible, are but too apt to lose, under the double temptations of gain and of drink, what elements of the "Gentle Life" they have gained from their mothers at home.

The following morning early we rowed away again, full of longing, but not of hope, of reaching one or other of the Guacharo caves. Keeping along under the lee of the island, we crossed the "Umbrella Mouth," between it and Huevos, or Egg Island. On our right were the islands; on our left the shoreless gulf; and ahead the great mountain of the mainland, with a wreath of white fleece near its summit, and the shadows of clouds moving in dark patches up its sides. As we crossed, the tumbling swell which came in from the outer sea, and the columns of white spray which rose right and left against the two door-posts of that mighty gateway, augured ill for our chances of entering a cave. But on we went, with a warning not to be upset if we could avoid it, in

the shape of a shark's back fin above the oily swell; and under Huevos, and round into a lonely cove, with high crumbling cliffs bedecked with cereus and aloes in flower, their tall spikes of green flowers standing out against the sky, twenty or thirty feet in height, and beds of short wild pine-apples,[1] like amber-yellow fur, and here and there hanging leaves trailing down to the water; and on into a nook, the sight of which made us give up all hopes of the cave, but which in itself was worth coming from Europe to see. The work of ages of trade-surf had cut the island clean through, with a rocky gully between soft rocks some hundred feet in width. It was just passable at high tide; and through it we were to have rowed, and turned to the left to the cave in the windward cliffs. But ere we reached it the war outside said "No" in a voice which would take no denial, and when we beached the boat behind a high rock, and scrambled up to look out, we saw a sight, one half of which was not unworthy of the Cliffs of Hartland or Bude. On the further side of the knife-edge of rock, crumbling fast into the sea, a waste of breakers rolled through the chasm, though there was scarcely any wind to drive them, leaping, spouting, crashing, hammering down the soft cliffs which seemed to crumble, and did doubtless crumble at every blow; and beyond that the open blue sea, without a rock or a sail, hazy, in spite of the blazing sunlight,

[1] Pitcairnia?

beneath the clouds of spray. But there ceased the likeness to a rock scene on the Cornish coast; for at the other foot of the rock, not twenty yards from that wild uproar, the land-locked cove up which we had come, lay still as glass, and the rocks were richer with foliage than an English orchard. Everywhere down into the very sea, the Matapalos held and hung; their air-roots dangled into the very water; many of them had fallen into it, but grew on still, and blossomed with great white fragrant flowers, somewhat like those of a magnolia, each with a shining cake of amber wax as big as a shilling in the centre; and over the Matapalos, tree on tree, liane on liane, up to a negro garden, with its strange huge-leaved vegetables and glossy fruit-trees, and its black owner standing on the cliff, and peering down out of his little nest with grinning teeth and white wondering eyes, at the white men who were gathering, off a few yards of beach, among the great fallen leaves of the Matapalos, such shells as delighted our childhood in the West India cabinet at home.

We lingered long, filling our eyes with beauty: and then rowed away. What more was to be done? Through that very chasm we were to have passed out to the cave. And yet the sight of this delicious nook repaid us—so more than one of the party thought—for our disappointment. There was another Guacharo cave in the Monos channel, more under the lee. We would try that to-morrow.

As the sun sank that evening, we sat ourselves upon the eastern rocks, and gazed away into the pale, sad, boundless west; while Venus hung high, not a point, as here, but a broad disc of light, throwing a long gleam over the sea. Fish skipped over the clear calm water; and above, pelicans—the younger brown, the older grey—wheeled round and round in lordly flight, paused, gave a sudden half-turn, then fell into the water with wide-spread wings, and after a splash, rose with another skip-jack in their pouch. As it grew dark, dark things came trooping over the sea, by twos and threes, then twenty at a time, all past us toward a cave near by. Birds we fancied them at first, of the colour and size of starlings; but they proved to be bats, and bats, too, which have the reputation of catching fish. So goes the tale, believed by some who see them continually, and have a keen eye for nature; and who say that the bat sweeps the fish up off the top of the water with the scoop-like membrane of his hind-legs and tail. For this last fact I will not vouch. But I am assured that fish scales were found, after I left the island, in the stomachs of these bats; and that of the fact of their picking up small fish, there can be no doubt. "You could not," says a friend, "be out at night in a boat, and hear their continual swish, swish, in the water, without believing it." If so, the habit is a quaint change of nature in them for they belong, I am assured by my friend Professor

Newton, not to the insect-eating, but to the fruit-eating family of bats, who, in the West as in the East Indies, may be seen at night hovering round the Mango trees, and destroying much more fruit than they eat.

So we sat watching the little dark things flit by, like the gibbering ghosts of the suitors in the Odyssey, into the darkness of the cave; and then turned to long talk of things concerning which it is best nowadays not to write; till it was time to feel our way in-doors, by such light as Venus gave, over the slippery rocks, and then, cautiously enough, past the Manchineel[1] bush, a broken sprig of which would have raised an instant blister on the face or hand.

Our night, as often happens in the Tropics, was not altogether undisturbed; for, shortly after I had become unconscious of the chorus of toads and cicadas, my hammock came down by the head. Then I was woke by a sudden bark close outside, exactly like that of a clicketting fox: but as the dogs did not reply or give chase, I presumed it to be the cry of a bird, possibly a little owl. Next there rushed down the mountain a storm of wind and rain, which made the coco-leaves flap and creak, and rattle against the gable of the house; and set every door and window banging, till they were caught and brought to reason. And between the howls of the wind I became aware of a strange noise from sea-ward—a booming,

[1] Hippomane Mancinella.

or rather humming, most like that which a locomotive sometimes makes when blowing off steam. It was faint and distant, but deep and strong enough to set one guessing its cause. The sea beating into caves seemed, at first, the simplest answer. But the water was so still on our side of the island, that I could barely hear the lap of the ripple on the shingle twenty yards off; and the nearest surf was a mile or two away, over a mountain a thousand feet high. So puzzling vainly, I fell asleep, to awake, in the grey dawn, to the prettiest idyllic picture, through the half-open door, of two kids dancing on a stone at the foot of a coco-nut tree, with a background of sea and dark rocks.

As we went to bathe we heard again, in perfect calm, the same mysterious booming sound, and were assured by those who ought to have known, that it came from under the water, and was most probably made by none other than the famous musical or drum fish; of whom one had heard, and hardly believed, much in past years.

Mr. Joseph, author of the History of Trinidad from which I have so often quoted, reports that the first time he heard this singular fish was on board a schooner, at anchor off Chaguaramas.

"Immediately under the vessel I heard a deep and not unpleasant sound, similar to those one might imagine to proceed from a thousand Æolian harps; this ceased, and deep

Minos.

twanging notes succeeded; these gradually swelled into an uninterrupted stream of singular sounds like the booming of a number of Chinese gongs under the water; to these succeeded notes that had a faint resemblance to a wild chorus of a hundred human voices singing out of tune in deep bass."

"In White's 'Voyage to Cochin China,'" adds Mr. Joseph, "there is as good a description of this, or a similar submarine concert, as mere words can convey: this the voyager heard in the Eastern seas. He was told the singers were a flat kind of fish; he, however, did not see them."

"Might not this fish," he asks, "or one resembling it in vocal qualities, have given rise to the fable of the Sirens?"

It might, certainly, if the fact be true. Moreover, Mr. Joseph does not seem to be aware that the old Spanish Conquistadores had a myth that music was to be heard in this very Gulf of Paria, and that at certain seasons the Nymphs and Tritons assembled therein, and with ravishing strains sang their watery loves. The story of the music has been usually treated as a sailor's fable, and the Sirens and Tritons supposed to be mere stupid manatis, or sea-cows, coming in as they do still now and then to browse on man-grove shoots and turtle-grass:[1] but if the story of the music be true, the myth may have had a double root.

Meanwhile I see Hardwicke's "Science Gossip" for March

[1] Thalassia testudinum.

gives an extract from a letter of M. O. de Thoron, communicated by him to the Académie des Sciences, December, 1861, which confirms Mr. Joseph's story. He asserts that in the Bay of Pailon, in Esmeraldos, Ecuador, *i.e.* on the Pacific Coast, and also up more than one of the rivers, he has heard a similar sound, attributed by the natives to a fish which they call "The Siren," or "Musico." At first, he says, he thought it was produced by a fly, or hornet of extraordinary size; but afterwards, having advanced a little further, he heard a multitude of different voices, which harmonized together, imitating a church organ to great perfection. The good people of Trinidad believe that the fish which makes this noise is the trumpet-fish, or Fistularia,—a beast strange enough in shape to be credited with strange actions: but ichthyologists say positively no: that the noise (at least along the coast of the United States) is made by a Pogonias, a fish somewhat like a great bearded perch, and cousin of the Maigre of the Mediterranean, which is accused of making a similar purring or grunting noise, which can be heard from a depth of one hundred and twenty feet, and guides the fishermen to their whereabouts.

How the noise is made is a question. Cuvier was of opinion that it was made by the air-bladder, though he could not explain how: but the truth, if truth it be, seems stranger still. These fish, it seems, have strong bony palates

and throat-teeth for crushing shells and crabs, and make this wonderful noise simply by grinding their teeth together.

I vouch for nothing, save that I heard this strange humming more than once. As for the cause of it, I can only say, as was said of yore, that "I hold it for rashness to determine aught amid such fertility of Nature's wonders."

One afternoon we made an attempt on the other Guacharo cave, which lies in the cliff on the landward side of the Monos Boca. But alas! the wind had chopped a little to the northward; a swell was rolling in through the Boca; and when we got within twenty yards of the low-browed arch our crew lay on their oars and held a consultation, of which there could but be one result. They being white gentlemen, and not Negros, could trust themselves and each other, and were ready, as I know well, to "dare all that became a man." But every now and then a swell rolled in high enough to have cracked our sculls against the top, and out again deep enough to have staved the boat against the rocks. If we went to wreck, the current was setting strongly out to sea; and the Boca was haunted by sharks, and (according to the late Colonel Hamilton Smith), by a worse monster still, namely the giant ray,[1] which goes by the name of devil fish on the Carolina shores. He saw, he says, one of these monsters rise in this very Boca, at a sailor who had fallen overboard, cover

[1] Cephaloptera.

him with one of his broad wings, and sweep him down into the depths. And, on the whole, if Guacharos are precious, so is life. So, like Gyges of old, we "elected to survive," and rowed away with wistful eyes, determining to get Guacharos —a determination which was never carried out—from one of the limestone caverns of the northern mountains.

And now it may be asked, and reasonably enough, what Guacharos[1] are; and why five English gentlemen and a canny Scots coastguard-man should think it worth while to imperil their lives to obtain them.

I cannot answer better than by giving Humboldt's account of the Cave of Caripe, on the Spanish main hard by, where he discovered them, or rather described them to civilized Europe, for the first time.

"The Cueva del Guacharo is pierced in the vertical profile of a rock. The entrance is towards the south, and forms a vault eighty feet broad and seventy-two feet high. This elevation is but a fifth less than the colonnade of the Louvre. The rock that surmounts the grotto is covered with trees of gigantic height. The Mammee-tree and the Genipa, with large and shining leaves, raise their branches vertically towards the sky; while those of the Courbaril and the Erythrina form, as they extend themselves, a thick vault of verdure. Plants of the family of Pothos with

[1] Steatornis Caripensis.

succulent stems, Oxalises, and Orchideæ of a singular construction, rise in the driest cle fts of the rocks; while creeping plants waving in the winds are interwoven in festoons before the opening of the cavern. We distinguished in these festoons a Bignonia of a violet blue, the purple Dolichos, and, for the first time, that magnificent Solandra, the orange flower of which has a fleshy tube more than four inches long. The entrance of grottoes, like the view of cascades, derive their principal charm from the situation, more or less majestic, in which they are placed, and which in some sort determines the character of the landscape. What a contrast between the Cueva of Caripe and those caverns of the north crowned with oaks and gloomy larch-trees!

"But this luxury of vegetation embellishes not only the outside of the vault, it appears even in the vestibule of the grotto. We saw with astonishment plantain-leaved Heliconias, eighteen feet high, the Praga palm-trees, and arborescent Arums follow the banks of the river, even to those subterranean places. The vegetation continues in the cave of Caripe, as in the deep crevices of the Andes, half excluded from the light of day; and does not disappear till, advancing in the interior, we reach thirty or forty paces from the entrance. . . . .

"The Guacharo quits the cavern at nightfall, especially

when the moon shines. It is almost the only frugiferous nocturnal bird that is yet known; the conformation of its feet sufficiently shows that it does not hunt like our owls. It feeds on very hard fruits, as the Nutcracker and the Pyrrhocorax. The latter nestles also in clefts of rocks, and is known under the name of night-crow. The Indians assured us that the Guacharo does not pursue either the lamellicorn insects, or those phalænæ which serve as food to the goat-suckers. It is sufficient to compare the beaks of the Guacharo and goat-sucker to conjecture how much their manners must differ. It is difficult to form an idea of the horrible noise occasioned by thousands of these birds in the dark part of the cavern, and which can only be compared to the croaking of our crows, which in the pine forests of the north live in society, and construct their nests upon trees, the tops of which touch each other. The shrill and piercing cries of the Guacharos strike upon the vaults of the rocks, and are repeated by the echo in the depth of the cavern. The Indians showed us the nests of these birds by fixing torches to the end of a long pole. These nests were fifty or sixty feet high above our heads, in holes in the shape of funnels, with which the roof of the grotto is pierced like a sieve. The noise increased as we advanced, and the birds were affrighted by the light of the torches of copal.

When this noise ceased a few minutes around us we heard at a distance the plaintive cries of the birds roosting in other ramifications of the cavern. It seemed as if these bands answered each other alternately.

"The Indians enter into the Cueva del Guacharo once a year, near midsummer, armed with poles, by means of which they destroy the greater part of the nests. At this season several thousands of birds are killed; and the old ones, as if to defend their brood, hover over the heads of the Indians, uttering terrible cries. The young, which fall to the ground, are opened on the spot. Their peritoneum is extremely loaded with fat, and a layer of fat reaches from the abdomen to the anus, forming a kind of cushion between the legs of the bird. This quantity of fat in frugivorous animals, not exposed to the light, and exerting very little muscular motion, reminds us of what has been long since observed in the fattening of geese and oxen. It is well-known how favourable darkness and repose are to this process. The nocturnal birds of Europe are lean, because, instead of feeding on fruits, like the Guacharo, they live on the scanty produce of their prey. At the period which is commonly called at Caripe the "oil harvest," the Indians build huts with palm-leaves near the entrance, and even in the porch of the cavern. Of these we still saw some remains. There, with a fire of brushwood, they

melt in pots of clay the fat of the young birds just killed. This fat is known by the name of butter or oil (*manteca* or *aceite*) of the Guacharo. It is half liquid, transparent, without smell, and so pure that it may be kept above a year without becoming rancid. At the convent of Caripe no other oil is used in the kitchen of the monks but that of the cavern; and we never observed that it gave the aliments a disagreeable taste or smell.

"Young Guacharos have been sent to the port of Cumana, and lived there several days without taking any nourishment; the seeds offered to them not suiting their taste. When the crops and gizzards of the young birds are opened in the cavern, they are found to contain all sorts of hard and dry fruits, which furnish, under the singular name of Guacharo seed (*semilla del Guacharo*) a very celebrated remedy against intermittent fevers. The old birds carry these seeds to their young. They are carefully collected and sent to the sick at Cariaco, and other places of the low regions, where fevers are prevalent. . . . .

"The natives connect mystic ideas with this cave, inhabited by nocturnal birds; they believe that the souls of their ancestors sojourn in the deep recesses of the cavern. 'Man', say they, 'should avoid places which are

enlightened neither by the sun' (*Zis*) 'nor by the moon' (*Nuna*). To go and join the Guacharos is to rejoin their fathers, is to die. The magicians (*piaches*) and the poisoners (*imorons*) perform their nocturnal tricks at the entrance of the cavern, to conjure the chief of the evil spirits (*ivorokiamo*). Thus in every climate the first fiction of nations resemble each other, those especially which relate to two principles governing the world, the abode of souls after death, the happiness of the virtuous, and the punishment of the guilty. The most different and barbarous languages present a certain number of images which are the same, because they have their source in the nature of our intellect and our sensations. Darkness is everywhere connected with the idea of death. The Grotto of Caripe is the Tartarus of the Greeks; and the Guacharos, which hover over the rivulet, uttering plaintive cries, remind us of the Stygian birds. . . . .

"The missionaries, with all their authority, could not prevail on the Indians to penetrate farther into the cavern As the vault grew lower, the cries of the Guacharos became more shrill. We were obliged to yield to the pusillanimity of our guides, and trace back our steps. The appearence of the cavern was indeed very uniform. We find that a bishop of St. Thomas of Guiana had gone farther than ourselves. He had measured nearly two thousand

five hundred feet from the mouth to the spot where he stopped, though the cavern reached farther. The remembrance of this fact was preserved in the convent of Caripe, without the exact period being noted. The bishop had provided himself with great torches of white wax of Castille. We had torches composed only of the bark of trees and native resin. The thick smoke which issues from these torches, in a narrow subterranean passage, hurts the eyes and obstructs the respiration.

"We followed the course of the torrent to go out of the cavern. Before our eyes were dazzled by the light of day, we saw, without the grotto, the water of the river sparkling amid the foliage of the trees that concealed it. It was like a picture placed in the distance, and to which the mouth of the cavern served as a frame. Having at length reached the entrance, and seated ourselves on the banks of the rivulet, we rested after our fatigue. We were glad to be beyond the hoarse cries of the birds, and to leave a place where darkness does not offer even the charm of silence and tranquillity. We could scarcely persuade ourselves that the name of the grotto of Caripe had hitherto remained unknown in Europe. The Guacharos alone would have been sufficient to render it celebrated. These nocturnal birds have been nowhere yet discovered except in the mountains of Caripe and Cumanacoa."

So much from the great master, who was not aware (never having visited Trinidad) that the Guacharo was well-known there under the name of Diablotin. But his account of Caripe was fully corroborated by my host, who had gone there last year, and, by the help of the magnesium light, had penetrated further into the cave than either the Bishop or Humboldt. He had brought home also several Guacharos from the Trinidad caves, all of which died on the passage, for want, seemingly, of the oily nuts on which they feed. A live Guacharo has, as yet, never been seen in Europe; and to get one safe to the Zoological Gardens, as well as to get one or two corpses for the Cambridge Museum, was our hope—a hope still, alas! unfulfilled. A nest, however, of the Guacharo has been brought to England by my host since my departure; a round lump of mud, of the size and shape of a large cheese, with a shallow depression on the top, in which the eggs are laid. A list of the seeds found in the stomachs of Guacharos by my friend Mr. Prestoe of the Botanical Gardens, Port of Spain, will be found in an Appendix.

We rowed away, toward our island paradise. But instead of going straight home, we turned into a deep cove called Ance Maurice—all coves in the French islands are called Ances—where was something to be seen, and not to be forgotten again. We grated in, over a shallow bottom of

pebbles interspersed with grey lumps of coral pulp, and of Botrylli, azure, crimson, and all the hues of the flower-garden; and landed on the bank of a mangrove swamp, bored everywhere with the holes of landcrabs. One glance showed how these swamps are formed: by that want of tide which is the curse of the West Indies.

At every valley mouth the beating of the waves tends all the year round to throw up a bank of sand and shingle, damming the land-water back to form a lagoon. This might indeed empty itself during the floods of the rainy season: but during the dry season it must remain a stagnant pond, filling gradually with festering vegetable matter from the hills, beer-coloured, and as hideous to look at as it is to smell. Were there a tide, as in England, of from ten to twenty feet, that swamp would be drained twice a day to nearly that depth; and healthy vegetation, as in England, establish itself down to the very beach. A tide of a foot or eighteen inches only, as is too common in the West Indies, will only drain the swamp to that depth; and probably, if there be any strong pebble-bearing surf outside, not at all. So there it all lies, festering in the sun, and cooking poison day and night; while the mangroves and graceful white roseaux[1] (tall canes) kindly do their best to lessen the mischief, by rooting in the

[1] Gynerium saccharoides.

slush, and absorbing the poison with their leaves. A white man, sleeping one night on the edge of that pestilential little triangle, half an acre in size, would be in danger of catching a fever and ague, which would make a weaker man of him for the rest of his life. And yet so thoroughly fitted for the climate is the Negro, that not ten yards from the edge of the mud stood a comfortable negro-house, with stout healthy folk therein, evidently well to do in the world, to judge from the poultry, and the fruit-trees and provision ground which stretched up the glen.

Through the provision-ground we struggled up, among weeds as high as our shoulders; so that it was difficult, as usual, to distinguish garden from forest. But no matter to the black owner. The weeds were probably of only six weeks' growth; and when they got so high that he actually could not find his tanias[1] among them, he would take cutlass and hoe, and make a lazy raid upon them, or rather upon a quarter of them, certain of two facts; that in six weeks more they would be all as high as ever; and that if they were, it did not matter; for so fertile is the soil, so genial the climate, that he would get in spite of them more crop off the ground than he needed. "Pity the poor weeds. Is there not room enough in the world for them and for us?" seems the Negro's motto. But he

[1] Xanthosoma; a huge plant like our Arums, with an edible root.

knows his own business well enough; and can exert himself when he really needs to do so; and if the weeds harmed him seriously he would make short work with them. Still this soil, and this climate, put a premium on bad farming, as they do on much else that is bad.

Up we pushed along the narrow path, past curious spiral flags[1] just throwing out their heads of delicate white or purple flower, and under the shade of great Balisiers or wild plantains,[2] with leaves six or eight feet long; and many another curious plant unknown to me; and then through a little copse, of which we had to beware, for it was all black Roseau[3]—a sort of dwarf palm some fifteen feet high, whose stems are covered with black steel needles, which, on being touched, run right through your finger, or your hand, if you press hard enough, and then break off; on which you cut them out if you can. If you cannot, they are apt, like needles, to make voyages about among the muscles, and reappear at some unexpected spot, causing serious harm. Of all the vegetable pests of the forest, none, not even the croc-chien, is so ugly a neighbour as certain varieties of black Roseau.

All this while—I fear I may be prolix: but one must write as one walked, stopping every moment to seize something new, and longing for as many pair of eyes as a spider—all this while, I say, we heard the roar of the trade-surf

[1] Costus. [2] Heliconia. [3] Bactris.

growing louder and louder in front; and pushing cautiously through the Roseau, found ourselves on a cliff thirty feet high, and on the other side of the island.

Now it was plain how the Bocas had been made; for here was one making.

Before us seethed a shallow horse-shoe bay, almost a lake, some two hundred yards across inside, but far narrower at the mouth. Into it, between two lofty points of hard rock, worn into caves and pillars and natural arches, the trade-surf came raging in from the north, hurling columns of foam right and left, and then whirling round and round beneath us upon a narrow shore of black sand with such fury, that one seemed to see the land torn away by each wave. The cliffs, some thirty feet high where we stood, rose to some hundred at the mouth, in intense black and copper and olive shadows, with one bright green tree in front of a cave's mouth, on which, it seemed, the sun had never shone; while a thousand feet overhead were glimpses of the wooded mountain-tops, with tender slanting lights, for the sun was growing low, through blue-grey mist on copse and lawn high above. A huge dark-headed Balata,[1] like a storm-torn Scotch pine, crowned the left-hand cliff; two or three young fan-palms,[2] just ready to topple headlong,

[1] Mimusops Balata.
[2] Probably Thrinax radiata (Grisebach, p. 515).

the right hand one; and beyond all, through the great gateway gleamed, as elsewhere, the foam-flecked hazy blue of the Caribbean Sea.

We stood spell-bound for a minute at the sudden change of scene and of feeling. From the still choking blazing steam of the leeward glen, we had stepped in a moment into coolness and darkness, pervaded by the delicious rush of the north-eastern wind; into a hidden sanctuary of Nature where one would have liked to build, and live and die: had not a second glance warned us that to die was the easiest of the three. For the whole cliff was falling daily into the sea, and it was hardly safe to venture to the beach for fear of falling stones and earth.

Down, however, we went, by a natural ladder of Matapalo roots, and saw at once how the cove was being formed. The rocks are probably Silurian; and if so, of quite immeasurable antiquity. But instead of being hard, as Silurian rocks are wont to be, they are mere loose beds of dark sand and shale, yellow with sulphur, or black with carbonaceous matter, amid which strange flakes and nodules of white quartz lie loose, ready to drop out at the blow of every wave. The strata, too, sloped upward and outwards toward the sea, which is therefore able to undermine them perpetually; and thus the searching surge, having once formed an entrance in the cliff-face, between what are

now the two outer points, has had nought to do but to gnaw inward; and will gnaw, till the Isle of Monos is cut sheer in two, and the "Ance Biscayen," as the wonderful little bay is called, will join itself to the Ance Maurice and the Gulf of Paria. In two or three generations hence the little palm-wood will have fallen into the sea. In two or three more, the Negro house and garden and the mangrove swamp will be gone likewise: and in their place the trade-surf will be battering into the Gulf of Paria from the Northern Sea, through just such a mountain chasm as we saw at Huevos; and a new Boca will have been opened.

But not, understand, a deep and navigable one, as long as the land retains its present level. To make that, there must be a general subsidence of the land and sea bottom around. For surf, when eating into land, gnaws to little deeper than low water-mark: no deeper, probably, than the bottoms of the troughs between the waves. Its tendency is—as one may see along the Ramsgate cliffs—to pare the land away into a flat plain, just covered by a shallow sea. No surf or currents could have carved out the smaller Bocas to a depth of between twenty and eighty fathoms; much less the great Boca of the Dragon's Mouth, between Chacachacarra and the Spanish main, to a depth of more than seventy fathoms. They are sunken mountain passes,

whose sides have been since carved into upright cliffs by the gnawing of the sea; and, as Mr. Wall well observes,[1] "the situation of the Bocas is in a depression of the range, perhaps of the highest antiquity."

We wandered along the beach, looking up at a cliff clothed, wherever it was not actually falling away, with richest verdure down to the water's edge; but in general utterly bare, falling away too fast to give root-hold to any plant. We lay down on the black sand, and gazed, and gazed, and picked up quartz crystals fallen from above, and wondered how the cove had got its name. Had some old Biscayan whaler, from Biarritz or St. Jean de Luz, wandered into these seas in search of fish, when, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, he and his fellows had killed out all the Right Whales of the Bay of Biscay? And had he, missing the Bocas, been wrecked and perished, as he may well have done, against those awful walls? At last we turned to re-ascend —for the tide was rising—after our leader had congratulated us on being, perhaps, the only white men who had ever seen Ance Biscayen—a congratulation which was premature; for, as we went to climb up the Matapalo-root ladder, we were stopped by several pairs of legs coming down it, which belonged, it seemed, to a bathing party of pleasant French people, "marooning" (as picniccing is called here) on the

[1] Geological Survey of Trinidad.

island; and after them descended the yellow frock of a Dominican monk, who, when landed, was discovered to be an old friend, now working hard among the Roman Catholic Negros of Port of Spain.

On the way back to our island paradise we found along the shore two plants worth notice—one, a low tree, with leaves somewhat like box, but obovate (larger at the tip than at the stalk), and racemes of little white flowers of a delicious honey-scent.[1] It ought to be, if it be not yet, introduced into England, as a charming addition to the winter hot-house. As for the other plant, would that it could be introduced likewise, or rather that, if introduced, it would flower in a house; for it is a glorious climber, second only to that which poor Dr. Krueger calls "the wonderful Norantea," which shall be described in its place. You see a tree blazing with dark gold, passing into orange, and that to red; and on nearing it find it tiled all over with the flowers of a creeper,[2] arranged in flat rows of spreading brushes, some foot or two long, and holding each hundreds of flowers, growing on one side only of the twig, and turning their multitudinous golden and orange stamens upright to the sun. There—I cannot describe it. It must be seen first afar off, and then close, to understand the vagaries of splendour in

[1] Jacquinia Armillaris. [2] Combretum (laxifolium?).

which nature indulges here. And yet the Norantea, common in the high woods, is even more splendid, and, in a botanist's eyes, a stranger vagary still.

On past the whaling quay. It was deserted; for the whales had not yet come in, and there was no chance of seeing a night scene which is described as horribly beautiful—the sharks around a whale while flensing is going on, each monster bathed in phosphorescent light, which makes his whole outline, and every fin, even his evil eyes and teeth, visible far under water, as the glittering fiend comes up from below, snaps his lump out of the whale's side, and is shouldered out of the way by his fellows. We were unlucky indeed, in the matter of sharks; for, with the exception of a problematical back-fin or two, we saw none in the West Indies, though they were swarming round us.

The next day the boat's head was turned homewards. And what had been learnt at the little bay of Ance Biscayen suggested, as we went on, a fresh geological question. How the outer islands of the Bocas had been formed, or were being formed, was clear enough. But what about the inner islands? Gaspar Grande, and Diego, and the Five Islands, and the peninsula—or island—of Punta Grande? How were these isolated lumps of limestone hewn out into high points, with steep cliffs, not to the windward, but to the leeward? What made the steep cliff at the south end

of Punta Grande, on which a mangrove swamp now abuts? No trade-surf, no current capable of doing that work, has disturbed the dull waters of the "Golfo Triste," as the Spaniards named the Gulf of Paria, since the land was of anything like its present shape. And gradually we began to dream of a time when the Bocas did not exist; when the Spanish main was joined to the northern mountains of the island by dry land, now submerged or eaten away by the trade-surf; when the northern currents of the Orinoco, instead of escaping through the Bocas as now, were turned eastward, past these very islands, and along the foot of the northern mountains, over what is now the great lowland of Trinidad, depositing those rich semi-alluvial strata which have been since upheaved, and sawing down along the southern slope of the mountains those vast beds of shingle and quartz boulders which now form as it were a gigantic ancient sea-beach right across the island. A dream it may be: but one which seemed reasonable enough to more than one in the boat, and which subsequent observations tended to verify.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HIGH WOODS.

I HAVE seen them at last. I have been at last in the High Woods, as the primæval forest is called here; and they are not less, but more, wonderful than I had imagined them. But they must wait awhile; for in reaching them, though they were only ten miles off, I passed through scenes so various, and so characteristic of the Tropics, that I cannot do better than sketch them one by one.

I drove out in the darkness of the dawn, under the bamboos, and Bauhinias, and palms which shade the road between the Botanic Gardens and the savannah, toward Port of Spain. The frogs and cicalas had nearly finished their nightly music. The fire-flies had been in bed since midnight. The air was heavy with the fragrance of the Bauhinias, and after I passed the great Australian Blue-gum which overhangs the road, and the Wallaba-tree,[1] with its thin curved pods dangling from in-

[1] Eperua falcata.

numerable bootlaces six feet long, almost too heavy with the fragrance of the "white Ixora."[1] A flush of rose was rising above the eastern mountains, and it was just light enough to see overhead the great flowers of the "Bois chataigne,"[2] among its horse-chestnut-like leaves; red flowers as big as a child's two hands, with petals as long as its fingers. Children of Mylitta the moon goddess, they cannot abide the day; and will fall, brown and shrivelled, before the sun grows high, after one night of beauty and life, and probably of enjoyment. Even more swiftly fades an even more delicate child of the moon, the Ipomœa Bona-nox, whose snow-white patines, as broad as the hand, open at nightfall on every hedge, and shrivel up with the first rays of dawn.

On through the long silent street of Port of Spain, where the air was heavy with everything but the fragrance of Ixoras, and the dogs and vultures sat about the streets, and were all but driven over every few yards, till I picked up a guide—will he let me say a friend?—an Aberdeenshire Scot, who hurried out fresh from his bath, his trusty cutlass on his hip, and in heavy shooting-boots and gaiters; for no clothing, be it remembered, is too strong for the bush; and those who enter it in the white calico garments, in which West-India planters figure on the stage, are like to leave in it, not only their clothes, but their skin besides.

[1] Posoqueria. [2] Carolinea.

In five minutes more we were on board the gig, and rowing away south over the muddy mirror; and in ten minutes more the sun was up, and blazing so fiercely, that we were glad to cool ourselves in fancy, by talking over salmon-fishings in Scotland and New Brunswick, and wadings in icy streams beneath the black pine-woods.

Behind us were the blue mountains, streaked with broad lights and shades by the level sun. On our left the interminable low line of bright green mangrove danced and quivered in the mirage, and loomed up in front, miles away, till single trees seemed to hang in air far out at sea. On our right, hot mists wandered over the water, blotting out the horizon, till the coasting craft, with distorted sails and masts, seemed afloat in smoke. One might have fancied oneself in the Wash off Sandringham on a burning summer's noon.

Soon logs and stumps, standing out of the water, marked the mouth of the Caroni; and we had to take a sweep out seaward to avoid its mud-banks. Over that very spot, now unnavigable, Raleigh and his men sailed in to conquer Trinidad.

On one log a huge black and white heron moped all alone, looking in the mist as tall as a man; and would not move for all our shouts. Schools of fish dimpled the water; and brown pelicans fell upon them, dashing up fountains of silver. The trade-breeze, as it rose, brought off the swamps a sickly smell,

suggestive of the need of coffee, quinine, Angostura bitters, or some other febrifuge. In spite of the glorious sunshine, the whole scene was sad, desolate, almost depressing, from its monotony, vastness, silence; and we were glad, when we neared the high tree which marks the entrance of the Chaguanas Creek, and turned at last into a recess in the mangrove bushes; a desolate pool, round which the mangrove roots formed an impenetrable net. As far as the eye could pierce into the tangled thicket, the roots interlaced with each other, and arched down into the water in innumerable curves, by no means devoid of grace, but hideous just because they were impenetrable. Who could get over those roots, or through the scrub which stood stilted on them, letting down at every yard or two fresh air-roots from off its boughs, to add fresh tangle, as they struck into the mud, to the horrible imbroglio? If one had got in among them, I fancied, one would never have got out again. Struggling over and under endless trap-work, without footing on it or on the mud below, one must have sunk exhausted in an hour or two, to die of fatigue and heat, or chill and fever.

Let the mangrove foliage be as gay and green as it may—and it is gay and green—a mangrove swamp is a sad, ugly, evil place; and so I felt that one to be that day.

The only moving things were some large fish, who were leaping high out of water close to the bushes, glittering in

the sun. They stopped as we came up: and then all was still, till a slate-blue heron[1] rose lazily off a dead bough, flapped fifty yards up the creek, and then sat down again. The only sound beside the rattle of our oars was the metallic note of a pigeon in the high tree, which I mistook then and afterwards for the sound of a horn.

On we rowed, looking out sharply right and left for an alligator basking on the mud among the mangrove roots. But none appeared, though more than one, probably, was watching us, with nothing of him above water but his horny eyes. The heron flapped on ahead, and settled once more, as if leading us on up the ugly creek, which grew narrower and fouler, till the oars touched the bank on each side, and drove out of the water shoals of four-eyed fish, ridiculous little things about as long as your hand, who, instead of diving to the bottom like reasonable fish, seemed possessed with the fancy that they could succeed better in the air, or on land; and accordingly jumped over each other's backs, scrambled out upon the mud, swam about with their goggle-eyes projecting above the surface of the water, and, in fact, did anything but behave like fish.

This little creature, (Star-gazer,[2] as some call him), is, you must understand, one of the curiosities of Trinidad, and of the Guiana Coast. He looks, on the whole, like a grey mullet,

[1] Ardea leucogaster. [2] Anableps tetropthalmus.

with a large blunt head, out of which stand, almost like horns, the eyes, from which he takes his name. You may see in Wood's "Illustrated Natural History," a drawing of him, which is—I am sorry to say—one of the very few bad ones in the book; and read how, "at a first glance, the fish appears to possess four distinct eyes, each of these organs being divided across the middle, and apparently separated into two distinct portions. In fact an opaque band runs transversely across the corner of the eye, and the iris, or coloured portion, sends out two processes, which meet each other under the transverse band of the cornea, so that the fish appears to possess even a double pupil. Still, on closer investigation, the connection between the divisions of the pupil are apparent, and can readily be seen in the young fish. The lens is shaped something like a jargonelle pear, and so arranged that its broad extremity is placed under the large segment of the cornea."

These strangely specialized eyes—so folks believe here—the fish uses by halves. With the lower halves he sees through the water, with the upper halves through the air; and, elevated by this quaint privilege, he aspires to be a terrestrial animal, emulating, I presume, the alligators around, and tries to take his walks upon the mud. You may see, as you go down to bathe on the east coast, a group of black dots, in pairs, peering up out of the sand, at the very highest verge

of the surf line. As you approach them, they leap up, and prove themselves to belong to a party of four-eyes, who run—there is no other word— down the beach, dash into the roaring surf, and the moment they see you safe in the sea run back again on the next wave, and begin staring at the sky once more. He who sees four-eyes for the first time without laughing must be much wiser, or much stupider, than any man has a right to be.

Suddenly the mangroves opened, and the creek ended in a wharf, with barges alongside. Baulks of strange timbers lay on shore. Sheds were full of empty sugar-casks, ready for the approaching crop-time. A truck was waiting for us on a tramway; and we scrambled on shore on a bed of rich black mud, to be received, of course, in true West Indian fashion, with all sorts of courtesies and kindnesses.

And here let me say, that those travellers who complain of discourtesy in the West Indies can have only themselves to thank for it. The West Indian has self respect, and will not endure people who give themselves airs. He has prudence too, and will not endure people whom he expects to betray his hospitality by insulting him afterwards in print. But he delights in pleasing, in giving, in showing his lovely islands to all who will come and see them; Creole, immigrant, coloured or white man, Spaniard, Frenchman, Englishman, or Scotchman, each and all, will prove themselves thoughtful

hosts and agreeable companions, if they be only treated as gentlemen usually expect to be treated elsewhere. On board a certain steamer, it was once proposed that the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company should issue cheap six-month season tickets to the West Indies, available for those who wished to spend the winter in wandering from island to island. The want of hotels was objected, naturally enough, by an Englishman present. But he was answered at once, that one or two good introductions to a single island would insure hospitality throughout the whole archipelago.

A long-legged mule, after gibbing enough to satisfy his own self-respect, condescended to trot off with us up the tramway, which lay along a green drove strangely like one in the Cambridgeshire fens. But in the ditches grew a pea with large yellow flower-spikes, which reminded us that we were not in England; and beyond the ditches rose on either side, not wheat and beans, but sugar-cane ten and twelve feet high. And a noble grass it is, with its stems as thick as one's wrist, tillering out below in bold curves over the well-hoed dark soil, and its broad bright leaves falling and folding above in curves as bold as those of the stems: handsome enough thus, but more handsome still, I am told, when the "arrow," as the flower is called, spreads over the cane-piece a purple haze, which flickers in long shining waves before the breeze. One only fault it has; that from the luxuriance of its

growth, no wind can pass through it; and that therefore the heat of a cane-field trace is utterly stifling. Here and there we passed a still uncultivated spot; a desolate reedy swamp, with pools, and stunted alder-like trees, reminding us again of the Deep Fens, while the tall chimneys of the sugar-works, and the high woods beyond, completed the illusion. One might have been looking over Holm Fen toward Caistor Hanglands; or over Deeping toward the remnants of the ancient Bruneswald.

Soon, however, we had a broad hint that we were not in the Fens, but in a Tropic island. A window in heaven above was suddenly opened; out of it, without the warning cry of Gardyloo—well-known in Edinburgh of old—a bucket of warm water, happily clean, was emptied on each of our heads; and the next moment all was bright again. A thunder shower, without a warning thunder-clap, was to me a new phenomenon, which was repeated several times that day. The suddenness and the heaviness of the tropic showers at this season is as amusing, as it is trying. The umbrella or the waterproof must be always ready, or you will get wet through. And getting wet here is a much more serious matter than in a temperate climate, where you may ride or walk all day in wet clothes and take no harm; for the rapid radiation, produced by the intense sunshine, causes a chill which may beget, only too easily, fever and ague not to be as easily shaken off.

The cause of these rapid and heavy showers is simple enough. The trade-wind, at this season of the year, is saturated with steam from the ocean which it has crossed; and the least disturbance in its temperature, from ascending hot air or descending cold, precipitates the steam in a sudden splash of water, out of a cloud, if there happens to be one near; if not, out of the clear air. Therefore it is that these showers, when they occur in the day time, are most common about noon; simply because then the streams of hot air rise most frequently and rapidly, to struggle with the cooler layers aloft. There is thunder, of course, in the West Indies, continuous and terrible. But it occurs after midsummer, at the breaking up of the dry season and coming on of the wet.

At last the truck stopped at a manager's house with a Palmiste,[1] or cabbage-palm, on each side of the garden gate, a pair of columns which any prince would have longed for as ornaments for his lawn. It is the fashion here, and a good fashion it is, to leave the Palmistes, a few at least, when the land is cleared; or to plant them near the house, merely on account of their wonderful beauty. One Palmiste was pointed out to me, in a field near the road, which had been measured by its shadow at noon, and found to be one hundred and fifty-three feet in height. For more than a hundred feet the stem rose straight, smooth, and grey. Then three or four

[1] Oreodoxa oleracea.

spathes of flowers, four or five feet long each, jutted out and upward like; while from below them, as usual, one dead leaf, twenty feet long or more, dangled head downwards in the breeze. Above them rose, as always, the green portion of the stem for some twenty feet; and then the flat crown of feathers, as dark as yew, spread out against the blue sky, looking small enough up there, though forty feet at least in breadth. No wonder if the man who possessed such a glorious object dared not destroy it, though he spared it for a different reason from that for which the Negros spare, whenever they can, the gigantic Ceibas, or silk cotton trees. These latter are useless as timber; and their roots are, of course, hurtful to the canes. But the Negro is shy of felling the Ceiba. It is a magic tree, haunted by spirits. There are "too much jumbies in him," the negro says; and of those who dare to cut him down some one will die, or come to harm, within the year. In Jamaica, says my friend Mr. Gosse, "they believe that if a person throws a stone at the trunk, he will be visited with sickness, or other misfortune. When they intend to cut one down, they first pour rum at the root as a propitiatory offering." The Jamaica Negro, however, fells them for canoes, the wood being soft, and easily hollowed. But here, as in Demerara, the trees are left standing about in cane-pieces and pastures to decay into awful and fantastic shapes, with prickly spurs and board-walls of roots, high

enough to make a house among them simply by roofing them in; and a flat crown of boughs, some seventy or eighty feet above the ground, each bough as big as an average English tree, from which dangles a whole world of lianes, matapalos, orchids, wild pines with long air-roots or grey beards; and last, but not least, that strange and lovely parasite, the Rhipsalis cassytha, which you mistake first for a plume of green sea-weed, or a tress of Mermaid's hair which has got up there by mischance, and then for some delicate kind of pendent mistletoe; till you are told, to your astonishment, that it is an abnormal form of Cactus—a family which it resembles, save in its tiny flowers and fruit, no more than it resembles the Ceiba tree on which it grows; and told, too, that, strangely enough, it has been discovered in Angola—the only species of the Cactus tribe in the Old World.

And now we set ourselves to walk up to the Depôt, where the Government timber was being felled, and the real "High Woods" to be seen at last. Our path lay, along the half-finished tramway, through the first Cacao plantation I had ever seen, though, I am happy to say, not the last by many a one.

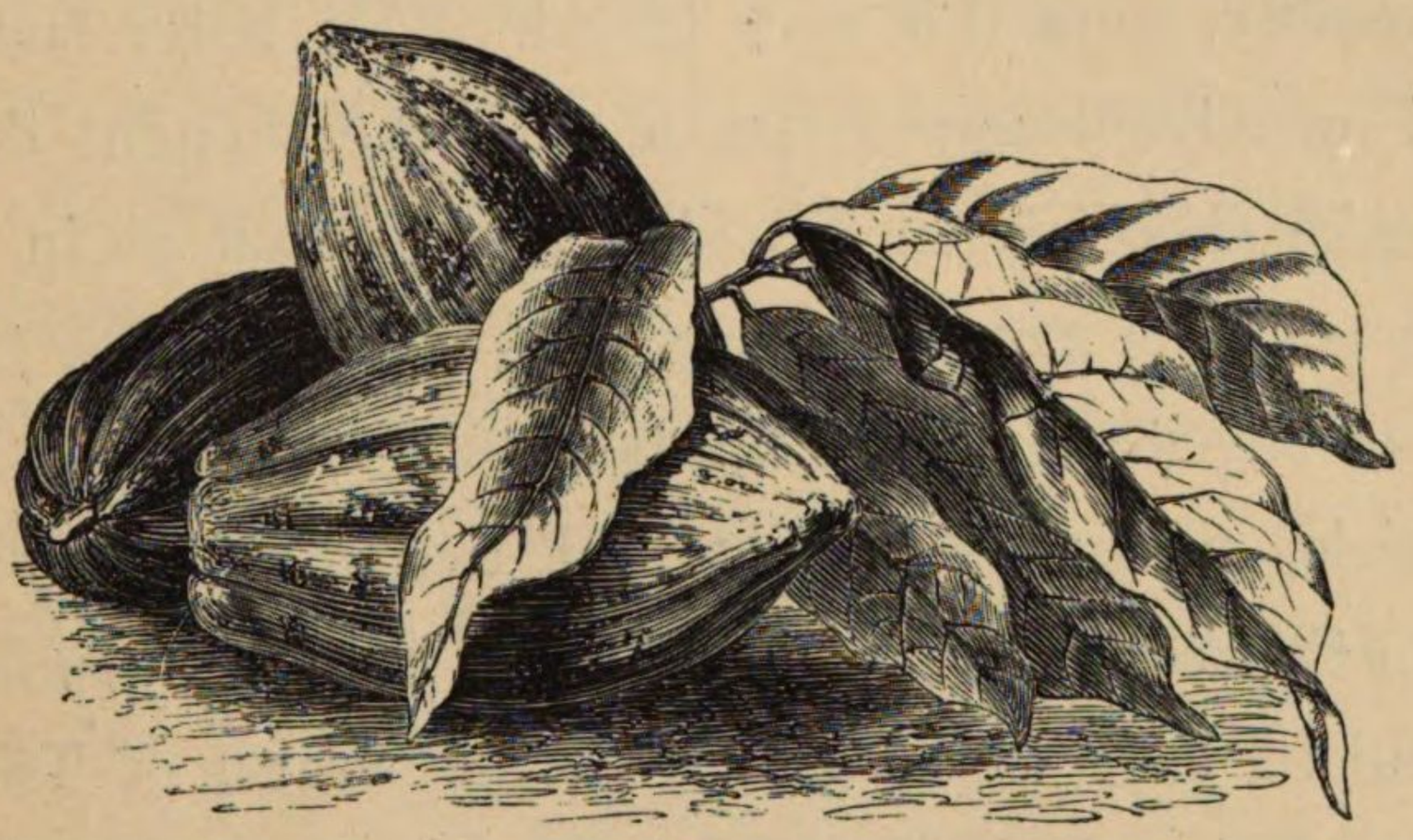
Imagine an orchard of nut-trees, with very large long leaves. Each tree is trained to a single stem. Among them, especially near the path, grow plants of the common hothouse

Datura, its long white flowers perfuming all the air. They have been planted as landmarks, to prevent the young Cacao-trees being cut over when the weeds are cleared. Among them, too, at some twenty yards apart, are the stems of a tree looking much like an ash, save that it is inclined to throw out broad spurs, like a Ceiba. You look up, and see that they are Bois immortelles,[1] fifty or sixty feet high, one blaze of vermilion against the blue sky. Those who have stood under a Lombardy poplar in early spring, and looked up at its buds and twigs, showing like pink coral against the blue sky, and have felt the beauty of the sight, can imagine faintly—but only faintly—the beauty of these "Madres de Cacao," Cacao-mothers as they call them here, because their shade is supposed to shelter the Cacao-trees, while the dew collected by their leaves keeps the ground below always damp.

I turned my dazzled eyes down again, and looked into the delicious darkness under the bushes. The ground was brown with fallen leaves, or green with ferns; and here and there a slant ray of sunlight pierced through the shade, and flashed on the brown leaves, and on a grey stem, and on a crimson jewel which hung on the stem—and there, again, on a bright orange one; and as my eye became accustomed to the darkness, I saw that the stems and larger boughs, far away into the wood,

[1] Erythrina umbrosa.

were dotted with pods, crimson or yellow or green, of the size and shape of a small hand closed with the fingers straight out. They were the Cacao-pods, full of what are called at home coco-nibs. And there lay a heap of them, looking like a heap of gay flowers; and by them sat their brown owner, picking them to pieces and laying the seeds to dry on a cloth. I went up and told him that I came from England



Cacao.

and never saw Cacao before, though I had been eating and drinking it all my life; at which news he grinned amusement till his white teeth and eyeballs made a light in that dark place, and offered me a fresh broken pod, that I might taste the pink sour-sweet pulp in which the rows of nibs lie packed, a pulp which I found very pleasant and refreshing.

He dries his Cacao-nibs in the sun, and, if he be a well-to-do and careful man, on a stage with wheels, which can be run into a little shed on the slightest shower of rain; picks them over and over, separating the better quality from the worse; and at last sends them down on mule-back to the sea, to be sold in London as Trinidad cocoa, or perhaps sold in Paris to the chocolate makers, who convert them into chocolate, "Menier" or other, by mixing them with sugar and vanilla, both, possibly, from this very island. This latter fact once inspired an adventurous German with the thought that he could make chocolate in Trinidad just as well as in Paris. And (so goes the story) he succeeded. But the fair Creoles would not buy it. It could not be good; it could not be the real article, unless it had crossed the Atlantic twice to and from that centre of fashion, Paris. So the manufacture, which might have added greatly to the wealth of Trinidad, was given up, and the ladies of the island eat nought but French chocolate, costing, it is said, nearly four times as much as home-made chocolate need cost.

As we walked on through the trace (for the tramway here was still unfinished) one of my kind companions pointed out a little plant, which bears in the island the ominous name of the Brinvilliers.[1] It is one of those deadly poisons too common in the bush, and too well known to the Negro

[1] Spigelia anthelmia.

Obi-men and Obi-women. And as I looked at the insignificant weed I wondered how the name of that wretched woman should have spread to this remote island, and have become famous enough to be applied to a plant. French Negros may have brought the name with them: but then arose another wonder. How were the terrible properties of the plant discovered? How eager and ingenious must the human mind be about the devil's work, and what long practice—considering its usual slowness and dulness—must it have had at the said work, ever to have picked out this paltry thing among the thousand weeds of the forest as a tool for its jealousy and revenge. It may have taken ages to discover the Brinvilliers, and ages more to make its poison generally known. Why not? As the Spaniards say, "The devil knows many things, because he is old." Surely this is one of the many facts which point toward some immensely ancient civilization in the Tropics, and a civilization which may have had its ugly vices, and have been destroyed thereby.

Now we left the Cacao grove: and I was aware, on each side of the trace, of a wall of green, such as I had never seen before on earth, not even in my dreams; strange colossal shapes towering up, a hundred feet and more in height, which, alas! it was impossible to reach; for on either side of the trace were fifty yards of half-cleared ground, fallen logs, withes, huge stumps ten feet high, charred and crumbling;

and among them and over them a wilderness of creepers and shrubs, and all the luxuriant young growth of the "rastrajo," which springs up at once whenever the primæval forest is cleared—all utterly impassable. These rastrajo forms, of course, were all new to me. I might have spent weeks in botanizing merely at them: but all I could remark, or cared to remark, there as in other places, was the tendency in the rastrajo toward growing enormous rounded leaves. How to get at the giants behind was the only question to one who for forty years had been longing for one peep at Flora's fairy palace, and saw its portals open at last. There was a deep gully before us, where a gang of convicts was working at a wooden bridge for the tramway, amid the usual abysmal mud of the tropic wet season. And on the other side of it there was no rastrajo right and left of the trace. I hurried down it like any schoolboy, dashing through mud and water, hopping from log to log, regardless of warnings and offers of help from good-natured Negros, who expected the respectable elderly "buccra" to come to grief; struggled perspiring up the other side of the gully; and then dashed away to the left, and stopped short, breathless with awe, in the primæval forest at last.

In the primæval forest; looking upon that upon which my teachers and masters, Humboldt, Spix, Martius, Schomburgk, Waterton, Bates, Wallace, Gosse, and the rest, had looked

already, with far wiser eyes than mine, comprehending somewhat at least of its wonders, while I could only stare in ignorance. There was actually, then, such a sight to be seen on earth; and it was not less, but far more wonderful than they had said.

My first feeling on entering the high woods was helplessness, confusion, awe, all but terror. One is afraid at first to venture in fifty yards. Without a compass or the landmark of some opening to or from which he can look, a man must be lost in the first ten minutes, such a sameness is there in the infinite variety. That sameness and variety make it impossible to give any general sketch of a forest. Once inside, "you cannot see the wood for the trees." You can only wander on as far as you dare, letting each object impress itself on your mind as it may, and carrying away a confused recollection of innumerable perpendicular lines, all straining upwards, in fierce competition, towards the light-food far above; and next of a green cloud, or rather mist, which hovers round your head, and rises, thickening and thickening to an unknown height. The upward lines are of every possible thickness, and of almost every possible hue; what leaves they bear, being for most part on the tips of the twigs, give a scattered, mist-like appearance to the under-foliage. For the first moment, therefore, the forest seems more open than an English wood. But try to walk through it, and ten steps undeceive you.

Around your knees are probably Mamures,[1] with creeping stems and fan-shaped leaves, something like those of a young coco-nut palm. You try to brush through them, and are caught up instantly by a string or wire belonging to some other plant. You look up and round: and then you find that the air is full of wires—that you are hung up in a network of fine branches belonging to half-a-dozen different sorts of young trees, and intertwined with as many different species of slender creepers. You thought at your first glance among the tree-stems that you were looking through open air; you find that you are looking through a labyrinth of wire-rigging, and must use the cutlass right and left at every five steps. You push on into a bed of strong sedge-like Sclerias, with cutting edges to their leaves. It is well for you if they are only three, and not six feet high. In the midst of them you run against a horizontal stick, triangular, rounded, smooth, green. You take a glance along it right and left, and see no end to it either way, but gradually discover that it is the leaf-stalk of a young Cocorite palm.[2] The leaf is five-and-twenty feet long, and springs from a huge ostrich plume, which is sprawling out of the ground and up above your head a few yards off. You cut the leaf-stalk through right and left, and walk on, to be stopped suddenly (for you get so confused by the multitude of objects that you never see anything till you run against it)

[1] Carludovica. [2] Maximiliana Caribæa.

The High Woods.

by a grey lichen-covered bar, as thick as your ankle. You follow it up with your eye, and find it entwine itself with three or four other bars, and roll over with them in great knots and festoons and loops twenty feet high, and then go up with them into the green cloud over your head, and vanish, as if a giant had thrown a ship's cables into the tree-tops. One of them, so grand that its form strikes even the Negro and the Indian, is a Liantasse.[1] You see that at once by the form of its cable—six or eight inches across in one direction, and three or four in another, furbelowed all down the middle into regular knots, and looking like a chain cable between two flexible iron bars. At another of the loops, about as thick as your arm, your companion, if you have a forester with you, will spring joyfully. With a few blows of his cutlass he will sever it as high up as he can reach, and again below, some three feet down; and, while you are wondering at this seemingly wanton destruction, he lifts the bar on high, throws his head back, and pours down his thirsty throat a pint or more of pure cold water. This hidden treasure is, strange as it may seem, the ascending sap, or rather the ascending pure rain-water which has been taken up by the roots, and is hurrying aloft, to be elaborated into sap, and leaf, and flower, and fruit, and fresh tissue for the very stem up which it originally climbed; and therefore it is that the woodman cuts the water-

[1] Schnella excisa.

vine through first at the top of the piece which he wants, and not at the bottom ; for so rapid is the ascent of the sap that if he cut the stem below, the water would have all fled upwards before he could cut it off above. Meanwhile, the old story of Jack and the Bean-stalk comes into your mind. In such a forest was the old dame's hut; and up such a bean-stalk Jack climbed, to find a giant and a castle high above. Why not? What may not be up there? You look up into the green cloud, and long for a moment to be a monkey. There may be monkeys up there over your head, burly red Howler,[1] or tiny peevish Sapajou,[2] peering down at you; but you cannot peer up at them. The monkeys, and the parrots, and the humming-birds, and the flowers, and all the beauty, are upstairs—up above the green cloud. You are in "the empty nave of the cathedral," and "the service is being celebrated aloft in the blazing roof."

We will hope that as you look up, you have not been careless enough to walk on; for if you have you will be tripped up at once: nor to put your hand out incautiously to rest it against a tree, or what not, for fear of sharp thorns, ants, and wasps' nests. If you are all safe, your next steps, probably, as you struggle through the bush between tree-trunks of every possible size, will bring you face to face with huge upright walls of seeming boards, whose rounded edges slope upward

[1] Mycetes. [2] Cebus.

till, as your eye follows them, you find them enter an enormous stem, perhaps round, like one of the Norman pillars of Durham nave, and just as huge; perhaps fluted, like one of William of Wykeham's columns at Winchester. There is the stem: but where is the tree? Above the green cloud. You struggle up to it, between two of the board walls, but find it not so easy to reach. Between you and it, are half-a-dozen tough strings which you had not noticed at first—the eye cannot focus itself rapidly enough in this confusion of distances—which have to be cut through ere you can pass. Some of them are rooted in the ground, straight and tense; some of them dangle and wave in the wind at every height. What are they? Air-roots of wild Pines,[1] or of Matapalos, or of Figs, or of Seguines,[2] or of some other parasite? Probably: but you cannot see. All you can see is, as you put your chin close against the trunk of the tree and look up, as if you were looking up against the side of a great ship set on end, that some sixty or eighty feet up in the green cloud, arms as big as English forest trees branch off; and that out of their forks a whole green garden of vegetation has tumbled down twenty or thirty feet, and half climbed up again. You scramble round the tree to find whence this aërial garden has sprung: you cannot tell. The tree-trunk is smooth and free from climbers; and that mass of verdure may

[1] Tillandsia. [2] Philodendron, Anthurium, &c.

belong possibly to the very cables which you met ascending into the green cloud twenty or thirty yards back, or to that impenetrable tangle, a dozen yards on, which has climbed a small tree, and then a taller one again, and then a taller still, till it has climbed out of sight and possibly into the lower branches of the big tree. And what are their species? what are their families? Who knows? Not even the most experienced woodman or botanist can tell you the names of plants of which he only sees the stems. The leaves, the flowers, the fruit, can only be examined by felling the tree; and not even always then, for sometimes the tree when cut refuses to fall, linked as it is by chains of liane to all the trees around. Even that wonderful water-vine which we cut through just now may be one of three or even four different plants.[1]

Soon, you will be struck by the variety of the vegetation; and will recollect what you have often heard, that social plants are rare in the tropic forests. Certainly they are rare in Trinidad; where the only instances of social trees are the Moras (which I have never seen growing wild) and the Moriche Palms. In Europe, a forest is usually made up of

[1] It may be a true vine, Vitis Caribæa, or Cissus Sicyoides (I owe the names of these water-vines, as I do numberless facts and courtesies, to my friend Mr. Prestoe, of the Botanic Gardens, Port of Spain); or, again, a Cinchonaceous plant, allied to the Quinine trees, Uncaria Guianensis; or possibly something else; for the botanic treasures of these forests are yet unexhausted, in spite of the labours of Crueger, Lockhart, Purdie, and De Schach.

one dominant plant—of firs or of pines, of oaks or of beeches, of birch or of heather. Here no two plants seem alike. There are more species on an acre here than in all the New Forest, Savernake, or Sherwood. Stems rough, smooth, prickly, round, fluted, stilted, upright, sloping, branched, arched, jointed, opposite-leaved, alternate-leaved, leafless, or covered with leaves of every conceivable pattern, are jumbled together, till the eye and brain are tired of continually asking "What next?" The stems are of every colour—copper, pink, grey, green, brown, black as if burnt, marbled with lichens, many of them silvery white, gleaming afar in the bush, furred with mosses and delicate creeping film-ferns, or laced with the air-roots of some parasite aloft. Up this stem scrambles a climbing Seguine[1] with entire leaves; up the next another quite different, with deeply cut leaves;[2] up the next the Ceriman[3] spreads its huge leaves, latticed and forked again and again. So fast do they grow, that they have not time to fill up the spaces between their nerves, and are consequently full of oval holes; and so fast does its spadix of flowers expand, that (as indeed do some other Aroids) an actual genial heat, and fire of passion, which may be tested by the thermometer, or even by the hand, is given off during fructification. Beware of breaking it, or the Seguines. They will

[1] Philodendron. [2] Philodendron lacerum. A noble plant.

[3] Monstera pertusa; a still nobler one: which may be seen, with Philodendrons, in great beauty at Kew.

probably give off an evil smell, and as probably a blistering milk. Look on at the next stem. Up it, and down again, a climbing fern[1] which is often seen in hothouses has tangled its finely-cut fronds. Up the next, a quite different fern is crawling, by pressing tightly to the rough bark its creeping root-stalks, furred like a hare's leg. Up the next, the prim little Griffe-chatte[2] plant has walked, by numberless clusters of small cats'-claws, which lay hold of the bark. And what is this delicious scent about the air? Vanille? Of course it is; and up that stem zigzags the green fleshy chain of the Vanille Orchis. The scented pod is far above, out of your reach; but not out of the reach of the next parrot, or monkey, or Negro hunter, who winds the treasure. And the stems themselves: to what trees do they belong? It would be absurd for one to try to tell you who cannot tell one-twentieth of them himself.[3] Suffice it to say, that over your head are perhaps a dozen kinds of admirable timber, which might be turned to a hundred uses in Europe, were it possible to get them thither: your guide (who here will be a second hospitable and cultivated Scot) will point with pride to one column after another, straight as those of a cathedral, and sixty to eighty feet

[1] Lygodium.

[2] (———— ?)

To know more of them, the reader should consult Dr. Crueger's list of woods sent from Trinidad to the Exhibition of 1862; or look at the collection itself (now at Kew), which was made by that excellent forester—if he will allow me to name him—Sylvester Devenish, Esquire, Crown Surveyor.

without branch or knob. That, he will say, is Fiddlewood;[1] that a Carapo,[2] that a Cedar,[3] that a Roble[4] (oak); that, larger than all you have seen yet, a Locust;[5] that, a Poui;[6] that, a Guatecare,[7] that an Olivier,[8] woods which, he will tell you, are all but incorruptible, defying weather and insects. He will show you, as curiosities, the smaller but intensely hard Letter wood,[9] Lignum vitæ,[10] and Purple heart.[11] He will pass by as useless weeds, Ceibas[12] and Sandbox-trees,[13] whose bulk appals you. He will look up, with something like a malediction, at the Matapalos, which, every fifty yards, have seized on mighty trees, and are enjoying, I presume, every different stage of the strangling art, from the baby Matapalo, who, like the one which you saw in the Botanic Garden, has let down his first air-root along his victim's stem, to the old sinner whose dark crown of leaves is supported, eighty feet in air, on innumerable branching columns of every size, cross-clasped to each other by transverse bars. The giant tree on which his seed first fell has rotted away utterly, and he stands in its place, prospering in his wickedness, like certain folk whom David knew too well. Your guide walks on with a sneer. But he stops with a smile of satisfaction as he sees lying on the ground dark green glossy leaves, which are fading

[1] Vitex. [2] Carapa Guianensis. [3] Cedrela. [4] Machærium.
[5] Hymenæa Courbaril. [6] Tecoma serratifolia. [7] Lecythis.
[8] Bucida. [9] Brosimum Aubletii. [10] Guaiacum.
[11] Copaifera. [12] Eriodendron. [13] Hura crepitans.

into a bright crimson; for overhead somewhere there must be a Balata,[1] the king of the forest; and there, close by, is his stem—a madder-brown column, whose head may be a hundred and fifty feet or more aloft. The forester pats the sides of his favourite tree, as a breeder might that of his favourite race-horse. He goes on to evince his affection, in the fashion of West Indians, by giving it a chop with his cutlass; but not in wantonness. He wishes to show you the hidden virtues of this (in his eyes) noblest of trees—how there issues out swiftly from the wound a flow of thick white milk, which will congeal, in an hour's time, into a gum intermediate in its properties between caoutchouc and gutta-percha. He talks of a time when the English gutta-percha market shall be supplied from the Balatas of the northern hills, which cannot be shipped away as timber. He tells you how the tree is a tree of a generous, virtuous and elaborate race—"a tree of God, which is full of sap," as one said of old of such—and what could he say better, less or more? For it is a Sapota, cousin to the Sapodilla, and other excellent fruit-trees, itself most excellent even in its fruit-bearing power; for every five years it is covered with such a crop of delicious plums, that the lazy Negro thinks it worth his while to spend days of hard work, besides incurring the penalty of the law (for the trees are Government property), in cutting it down for the sake of its fruit. But this

[1] Mimusops Balata.

tree your guide will cut himself. There is no gully between it and the Government station; and he can carry it away; and it is worth his while to do so; for it will square, he thinks, into a log more than three feet in diameter, and eighty, ninety—he hopes almost a hundred—feet in length of hard, heavy wood, incorruptible, save in salt water; better than oak, as good as teak, and only surpassed in this island by the Poui. He will make a stage round it, some eight feet high, and cut it above the spurs. It will take his convict gang (for convicts are turned to some real use in Trinidad) several days to get it down, and many more days to square it with the axe. A trace must be made to it through the wood, clearing away vegetation for which an European millionaire, could he keep it in his park, would gladly pay a hundred pounds a yard. The cleared stems, especially those of the palms, must be cut into rollers; and the dragging of the huge log over them will be a work of weeks, especially in the wet season. But it can be done, and it shall be; so he leaves a significant mark on his new-found treasure, and leads you on through the bush, hewing his way with light strokes right and left, so carelessly that you are inclined to beg him to hold his hand, and not destroy in a moment things so beautiful, so curious; things which would be invaluable in an English hothouse.

And where are the famous Orchids? They perch on every bough and stem: but they are not, with three or four

exceptions, in flower in the winter; and if they were, I know nothing about them — at least, I know enough to know how little I know. Whosoever has read Darwin's "Fertilization of Orchids," and finds in his own reason that the book is true, had best say nothing about the beautiful monsters till he has seen with his own eyes more than his master.

And yet even the three or four that are in flower are worth going many a mile to see. In the hothouse, they seem almost artificial from their strangeness: but to see them "natural," on natural boughs, gives a sense of their reality, which no unnatural situation can give. Even to look up at them perched on bough and stem, as one rides by; and to guess what exquisite and fantastic form may issue, in a few months or weeks, out of those fleshy, often unsightly, leaves, is a strange pleasure; a spur to the fancy which is surely wholesome, if we will but believe that all these things were invented by A Fancy, which desires to call out in us, by contemplating them, such small fancy as we possess; and to make us poets, each according to his power, by showing a world in which, if rightly looked at, all is poetry.

Another fact will soon force itself on your attention, unless you wish to tumble down and get wet up to your knees. The soil is furrowed everywhere by holes; by graves, some two or three feet wide and deep, and of uncertain length and

shape, often wandering about for thirty or forty feet, and running confusedly into each other. They are not the work of man, nor of an animal; for no earth seems to have been thrown out of them. In the bottom of the dry graves you sometimes see a decaying root: but most of them just now are full of water, and of tiny fish also, who burrow in the mud and sleep during the dry season, to come out and swim during the wet. These graves are, some of them, plainly quite new. Some, again, are very old; for trees of all sizes are growing in them and over them.

What makes them? A question not easily answered. But the shrewdest foresters say that they have held the roots of trees now dead. Either the tree has fallen and torn its roots out of the ground, or the roots and stumps have rotted in their place, and the soil above them has fallen in.

But they must decay very quickly, these roots, to leave their quite fresh graves thus empty: and—now one thinks of it—how few fallen trees, or even dead sticks, there are about. An English wood, if left to itself, would be cumbered with fallen timber; and one has heard of forests in North America, through which it is all but impossible to make way, so high are piled up, among the still-growing trees, dead logs in every stage of decay. Such a sight may be seen in Europe, among the high Silver-fir forests of the Pyrenees. How is it not so here? How indeed? And how comes it—if you will look

again—that there are few or no fallen leaves, and actually no leaf-mould? In an English wood there would be a foot—perhaps two feet—of black soil, renewed by every autumn leaf fall. Two feet? One has heard often enough of bison-hunting in Himalayan forests among Deodaras one hundred and fifty feet high, and scarlet Rhododendrons thirty feet high, growing in fifteen or twenty feet of leaf-and-timber mould. And here in a forest equally ancient, every plant is growing out of the bare yellow loam, as it might in a well-hoed garden bed. Is it not strange?

Most strange; till you remember where you are—in one of Nature's hottest and dampest laboratories. Nearly eighty inches of yearly rain and more than eighty degrees of perpetual heat make swift work with vegetable fibre, which, in our cold and sluggard clime, would curdle into leaf-mould, perhaps into peat. Far to the north, in poor old Ireland, and far to the south, in Patagonia, begin the zones of peat, where dead vegetable fibre, its treasures of light and heat locked up, lies all but useless age after age. But this is the zone of illimitable sun-force, which destroys as swiftly as it generates, and generates again as swiftly as it destroys. Here, when the forest giant falls, as some tell me that they have heard him fall, on silent nights, when the cracking of the roots below and the lianes aloft rattles like musketry through the woods, till the great trunk comes down, with a boom as

of a heavy gun, re-echoing on from mountain-side to mountain-side ; then—

"Nothing in him that doth fade,
But doth suffer an *air*-change
Into something rich and strange."

Under the genial rain and genial heat the timber tree itself, all its tangled ruin of lianes and parasites, and the boughs and leaves snapped off not only by the blow, but by the very wind, of the falling tree—all melt away swiftly and peacefully in a few months—say almost a few days—into the water, and carbonic acid, and sunlight, out of which they were created at first, to be absorbed instantly by the green leaves around, and, transmuted into fresh forms of beauty, leave not a wrack behind. Explained thus—and this I believe to be the true explanation—the absence of leaf-mould is one of the grandest, as it is one of the most startling, phænomena of the forest.

Look here at a fresh wonder. Away in front of us a smooth grey pillar glistens on high. You can see neither the top nor the bottom of it. But its colour, and its perfectly cylindrical shape, tell you what it is—a glorious Palmiste ; one of those queens of the forest which you saw standing in the fields ; with its capital buried in the green cloud and its base buried in that bank of green velvet plumes, which you must skirt carefully round, for they are a prickly dwarf palm, called

here Black Roseau.[1] Close to it rises another pillar, as straight and smooth, but one-fourth of the diameter—a giant's walking cane. Its head, too, is in the green cloud. But near are two or three younger ones only forty or fifty feet high, and you see their delicate feather heads, and are told that they are Manacques;[2] the slender nymphs which attend upon the forest queen, as beautiful, though not as grand, as she.

The land slopes down fast now. You are tramping through stiff mud, and those Roseaux are a sign of water. There is a stream or gully near: and now for the first time you can see clear sunshine through the stems; and see, too, something of the bank of foliage on the other side of the brook. You catch sight, it may be, of the head of a tree aloft, blazing with golden trumpet flowers, which is a Poui; and of another lower one covered with hoar-frost, perhaps a Croton;[3] and of another, a giant covered with purple tassels. That is an Angelim. Another giant overtops even him. His dark glossy leaves toss off sheets of silver light as they flicker in the breeze; for it blows hard aloft outside while you are in stifling calm. That is a Balata. And what is that on high?—Twenty or thirty square yards of rich crimson a hundred feet above the ground. The flowers may belong to the tree itself. It may be a Mountain-mangrove,[4] which I have never seen in

[1] Bactris. [2] Euterpe oleracea. [3] Croton gossypifolium. [4] Moronobea coccinea.

flower: but take the glasses and decide. No. The flowers belong to a liane. The "wonderful" Prince of Wales's feather[1] has taken possession of the head of a huge Mombin,[2] and tiled it all over with crimson combs which crawl out to the ends of the branches, and dangle twenty or thirty feet down, waving and leaping in the breeze. And over all blazes the cloudless blue.

You gaze astounded. Ten steps downward, and the vision is gone. The green cloud has closed again over your head, and you are stumbling in the darkness of the bush, half blinded by the sudden change from the blaze to the shade. Beware. "Take care of the Croc-chien!" shouts your companion: and you are aware of, not a foot from your face, a long, green, curved whip, armed with pairs of barbs some four inches apart; and are aware also, at the same moment, that another has seized you by the arm, another by the knees, and that you must back out, unless you are willing to part with your clothes first, and your flesh afterwards. You back out, and find that you have walked into the tips—luckily only into the tips—of the fern-like fronds of a trailing and climbing palm such as you see in the Botanic Gardens. That came from the East, and furnishes the rattan-canes. This[3] furnishes the gri-gri-canes, and is rather worse to meet, if possible, than the rattan. Your companion, while he helps

[1] Norantea. [2] Spondias lutea (Hog-plum). [3] Desmoncus.

you to pick the barbs out, calls the palm laughingly by another name, "Suelta-mi-Ingles;" and tells you the old story of the Spanish soldier at San Josef. You are near the water now; for here is a thicket of Balisiers.[1] Push through, under their great plantain-like leaves. Slip down the muddy bank to that patch of gravel. See first, though, that it is not tenanted already by a deadly Mapepire, or rattlesnake, which has not the grace, as his cousin in North America has, to use his rattle.

The brooklet, muddy with last night's rain, is dammed and bridged by winding roots, in shape like the jointed wooden snakes which we used to play with as children. They belong probably to a fig, whose trunk is somewhere up in the green cloud. Sit down on one, and look, around and aloft. From the soil to the sky, which peeps through here and there, the air is packed with green leaves of every imaginable hue and shape. Round our feet are Arums,[2] with snow-white spadixes and hoods, one instance among many here of brilliant colour developing itself in deep shade. But is the darkness of the forest actually as great as it seems? Or are our eyes, accustomed to the blaze outside, unable to expand rapidly enough, and so liable to mistake for darkness air really full of light reflected downward, again and again, at every angle, from the glossy surfaces of a million leaves? At

[1] Heliconia. [2] Spathiphyllum canufolium.

least we may be excused; for a bat has made the same mistake, and flits past us at noonday. And there is another—No; as it turns, a blaze of metallic azure off the upper side of the wings proves this one to be no bat, but a Morpho—a moth as big as a bat. And what was that second larger flash of golden green, which dashed at the moth, and back to yonder branch not ten feet off? A Jacamar[1]—kingfisher, as they miscall her here, sitting fearless of man, with the moth in her long beak. Her throat is snowy white, her under-parts rich red brown. Her breast, and all her upper plumage and long tail, glitter with golden green. There is light enough in this darkness, it seems. But now a look again at the plants. Among the white-flowered Arums are other Arums, stalked and spotted, of which beware; for they are the poisonous Seguine-diable,[2] the dumb-cane, of which evil tales were told in the days of slavery. A few drops of its milk, put into the mouth of a refractory slave, or again into the food of a cruel master, could cause swelling, choking, and burning agony for many hours.

Over our heads bend the great arrow leaves and purple leaf-stalks of the Tanias;[3] and mingled with them, leaves often larger still: oval, glossy, bright, ribbed, reflecting from

[1] Galbula.
[2] Dieffenbachia, of which varieties are not now uncommon in hothouses.
[3] Xanthosoma.

their underside a silver light. They belong to Arumas;[1] and from their ribs are woven the Indian baskets and packs. Above these, again, the Balisiers bend their long leaves, eight or ten feet long apiece; and under the shade of the leaves their gay flower-spikes, like double rows of orange and black birds' beaks upside down. Above them, and among them, rise stiff upright shrubs, with pairs of pointed leaves, a foot long some of them, pale green above, and yellow or fawn-coloured beneath. You may see, by the three longitudinal nerves in each leaf, that they are Melastomas of different kinds—a sure token they that you are in the Tropics—a probable token that you are in Tropical America.

And over them, and among them, what a strange variety of foliage: Look at the contrast between the Balisiers and that branch which has thrust itself among them, which you take for a dark copper-coloured fern, so finely divided are its glossy leaves. It is really a Mimosa—Bois Mulâtre[2] as they call it here. What a contrast again, the huge feathery fronds of the Cocorite palms which stretch right away hither over our heads, twenty and thirty feet in length. And what is that spot of crimson flame hanging in the darkest spot of all from an under-bough of that low weeping tree? A flower-head of the Rosa del Monte.[3] And what that bright

[1] Calathea. [2] Pentaclethra filamentosa. [3] Brownea.

straw-coloured fox's brush above it, with a brown hood like that of an Arum, brush and hood nigh three feet long each? Look—for you require to look more than once, sometimes more than twice—here, up the stem of that Cocorite, or as much of it as you can see in the thicket. It is all jagged with the brown butts of its old fallen leaves; and among the butts perch broad-leaved ferns, and fleshy Orchids, and above them, just below the plume of mighty fronds, the yellow fox's brush, which is its spathe of flower.

What next? Above the Cocorites dangle, amid a dozen different kinds of leaves, festoons of a liane, or of two, for one has purple flowers, the other yellow—Bignonias, Bauhinias—what not? And through them a Carat[1] palm has thrust its thin bending stem, and spread out its flat head of fan-shaped leaves twenty feet long each: while over it, I verily believe, hangs eighty feet aloft the head of the very tree upon whose roots we are sitting. For amid the green cloud you may see sprigs of leaf somewhat like that of a weeping willow;[2] and there, probably, is the trunk to which they belong, or rather what will be a trunk at last. At present it is like a number of round-edged boards of every size, set on end, and slowly coalescing at their edges. There is a slit down the middle of the trunk, twenty or thirty feet long. You may see the green light of the forest shining through it. Yes. That is probably

[1] Sabal. [2] Ficus salicifolia?

the fig; or, if not, then something else. For who am I, that I should know the hundredth part of the forms on which we look ?

And above all you catch a glimpse of that crimson mass of Norantea which we admired just now; and, black as yew against the blue sky and white cloud, the plumes of one Palmiste, who has climbed toward the light, it may be for centuries, through the green cloud; and now, weary and yet triumphant, rests her dark head among the bright foliage of a Ceiba, and feeds unhindered on the sun.

There, take your tired eyes down again; and turn them right, or left, or where you will, to see the same scene, and yet never the same. New forms, new combinations; a wealth of creative Genius—let us use the wise old word in its true sense—incomprehensible by the human intellect or the human eye, even as He is who makes it all, Whose garment, or rather Whose speech, it is. The eye is not filled with seeing, or the ear with hearing; and never would be, did you roam these forests for a hundred years. How many years would you need merely to examine and discriminate the different species ? And when you had done that, how many more to learn their action and reaction on each other? How many more to learn their virtues, properties, uses? How many more to answer the perhaps ever unanswerable question—How they exist

and grow at all? By what miracle they are compacted out of light, air, and water, each after its kind? How, again, those kinds began to be, and what they were like at first? Whether those crowded, struggling, competing shapes are stable or variable? Whether or not they are varying still? Whether even now, as we sit here, the great God may not be creating, slowly but surely, new forms of beauty round us? Why not? If He chose to do it, could He not do it? And even had you answered that question, which would require whole centuries of observation as patient and accurate as that which Mr. Darwin employed on Orchids and climbing plants, how much nearer would you be to the deepest question of all—Do these things exist, or only appear? Are they solid realities, or a mere phantasmagoria, orderly indeed, and law-ruled, but a phantasmagoria still; a picture-book by which God speaks to rational essences, created in His own likeness? And even had you solved that old problem, and decided for Berkeley or against him, you would still have to learn from these forests a knowledge which enters into man not through the head, but through the heart; which (let some modern philosophers say what they will) defies all analysis, and can be no more defined or explained by words, than a mother's love. I mean, the causes and the effects of their beauty; that "Æsthetic of plants," of which

Schleiden has spoken so well in that charming book of his, "The Plant," which all should read who wish to know somewhat of "The Open Secret."

But when they read it, let them read with open hearts. For that same "Open Secret" is, I suspect, one of those which God may hide from the wise and prudent, and yet reveal to babes.

At least, so it seemed to me, the first day that I went, awe-struck, into the High Woods; and so it seemed to me, the last day that I came, even more awe-struck, out of them.

Ceiba.

CHAPTER VIII.

LA BREA.

We were, of course, desirous to visit that famous Lake of Pitch, which our old nursery literature described as one of the "Wonders of the World." It is not that; it is merely a very odd, quaint, unexpected, and only half-explained phænomenon: but no wonder. That epithet should be kept for such matters as the growth of a crystal, the formation of a cell, the germination of a seed, the coming true of a plant, whether from a fruit or from a cutting: in a word, for any and all those hourly and momentary miracles which were attributed of old to some Vis Formatrix of nature; and are now attributed to some other abstract formula, as they will be to some fresh one, and to a dozen more, before the century is out; because the more accurately and deeply they are investigated, the more inexplicable they will be found.

So it is; but the "public" are not inclined to believe that so it is, and will not see, till their minds get somewhat of a truly scientific training.

If any average educated person were asked — Which seemed to him more wonderful, that a hen's egg should always produce a chicken, or that it should now and then produce a sparrow or a duckling?—can it be doubted what answer he would give? or that it would be the wrong answer? What answer, again, would he make to the question — Which is more wonderful, that dwarfs and giants — *i.e.* people under four feet six or over six feet six—should be exceedingly rare?—or that the human race is not of all possible heights from three inches to thirty feet? Can it be doubted that in this case, as in the last, the wrong answer would be given? He would defend himself, probably, if he had a smattering of science, by saying that experience teaches us that Nature works by "invariable laws;" by which he would mean, usually unbroken customs; and that he has, therefore, a right to be astonished if they are broken. But he would be wrong. The just cause of astonishment is, that the laws are, on the whole, invariable; that the customs are so seldom broken; that sun and moon, plants and animals, grains of dust and vesicles of vapour, are not perpetually committing some vagary or other, and making as great fools of themselves as human beings are wont to do. Happily for the existence of the universe, they do not. But how, and still more why, things in general behave so respectably and loyally, is a wonder which is either

utterly inexplicable, or explicable, I hold, only on the old theory that they obey Some One—whom we obey to a very limited extent indeed. Not that this latter theory gets rid of the perpetual and omnipresent element of wondrousness. If matter alone exists, it is a wonder and a mystery how it obeys itself. If A Spirit exists, it is a wonder and a mystery how He makes matter obey Him. All that the scientific man can do is, to confess the presence of mystery all day long; and to live in that wholesome and calm attitude of wonder which we call awe and reverence; that so he may be delivered from the unwholesome and passionate fits of wonder which we call astonishment, the child of ignorance and fear, and the parent of rashness and superstition. So will he keep his mind in the attitude most fit for seizing new facts, whenever they are presented to him. So he will be able, when he doubts of a new fact, to examine himself whether he doubts it on just grounds; whether his doubt may not proceed from mere self-conceit, because the fact does not suit his preconceived theories; whether it may not proceed from an even lower passion, which he shares (being human) with the most uneducated; namely, from dread of the two great bogies, Novelty and Size—novelty, which makes it hard to convince the country fellow that in the tropics great flowers grow on tall trees, as they do here on herbs; size, which makes it hard to convince him that in far lands trees

are often two and three hundred feet high, simply because he has never seen one here a hundred feet high. It is not surprising, but saddening, to watch what power these two phantoms have over the minds of those who would be angry if they were supposed to be uneducated. How often has one heard the existence of the sea-serpent declared impossible and absurd, on these very grounds, by people who thought they were arguing scientifically: the sea-serpent could not exist, firstly because—because it was so odd, strange, new, in a word, and unlike anything that they had ever seen or fancied; and, secondly, because it was so big. The first argument would apply to a thousand new facts, which physical science is daily proving to be true; and the second, when the reputed size of the sea-serpent is compared with the known size of the ocean, rather more silly than the assertion that a ten-pound pike could not live in a half-acre pond, because it was too small to hold him. The true arguments against the existence of a sea-serpent, namely, that no Ophidian could live long under water, and that therefore the sea-serpent, if he existed, would be seen continually at the surface; and again, that the appearance taken for a sea-serpent has been proved, again and again, to be merely a long line of rolling porpoises—these really sound arguments would be nothing to such people, or only be accepted as supplementing and corroborating their dislike

to believe in anything new, or anything a little bigger than usual.

But so works the average, *i.e.* the uneducated and barbaric intellect, afraid of the New and the Big, whether in space or in time. How the fear of those two phantoms has hindered our knowledge of this planet, the geologist knows only too well.

It was excusable, therefore, that this Pitch Lake should be counted among the wonders of the world; for it is, certainly, tolerably big. It covers ninety-nine acres, and contains millions of tons of so-called pitch.

Its first discoverers, of course, were not bound to see that a pitch lake of ninety-nine acres was no more wonderful than any of the little pitch wells—"spues" or "galls," as we should call them in Hampshire—a yard across; or any one of the tiny veins and lumps of pitch which abound in the surrounding forests; and no less wonderful than if it had covered ninety-nine thousand acres instead of ninety-nine. Moreover, it was a novelty. People were not aware of the vast quantity of similar deposits which exist up and down the hotter regions of the globe. And being new and big too, its genesis demanded, for the comfort of the barbaric intellect, a cataclysm, and a convulsion, and some sort of prodigious birth, which was till lately referred, like many another strange object, to volcanic action. The explanation

savoured somewhat of a "bull;" for what a volcano could do to pitch, save to burn it up into coke and gases, it is difficult to see.

It now turns out that the Pitch Lake, like most other things, owes its appearance on the surface to no convulsion or vagary at all, but to a most slow, orderly, and respectable process of nature, by which buried vegetable matter, which would have become peat, and finally brown coal, in a temperate climate, becomes, under the hot tropic soil, asphalt and oil, continually oozing up beneath the pressure of the strata above it. Such, at least, is the opinion of Messrs. Wall and Sawkins, the geological surveyors of Trinidad, and of several chemists whom they quote; and I am bound to say, that all I saw at the lake and elsewhere, during two separate visits, can be easily explained on their hypothesis, and that no other possible cause suggests itself as yet. The same cause, it may be, has produced the submarine spring of petroleum, off the shore near Point Rouge, where men can at times skim the floating oil off the surface of the sea; the petroleum and asphalt of the Windward Islands and of Cuba, especially the well-known Barbados tar; and the petroleum springs of the mainland, described by Humboldt, at Truxillo, in the Gulf of Cumana; and "the inexhaustible deposits of mineral pitch in the provinces of Merida and Coro, and, above all, in that of Maracaybo.

In the latter, it is employed for caulking the ships which navigate the lake."[1] But the reader shall hear what the famous lake is like, and judge for himself. Why not? He may not be "scientific," but, as Professor Huxley well says, what is scientific thought but common-sense well regulated?

Running down, then, by steamer, some thirty-six miles south from Port of Spain, along a flat mangrove shore, broken only at one spot by the conical hill of San Fernando, we arrived off a peninsula, whose flat top is somewhat higher than the lowland right and left. The uplands are rich with primeval forest, and perhaps always have been. The lower land, right and left, was, I believe, cultivated for sugar, till the disastrous epoch of 1846: but it is now furred over with rastrajo woods.

We ran, on our first visit, past the pitch point of La Brea, southwestward to Trois, where an industrial farm for convicts had been established by my host the Governor. We were lifted on shore through a tumbling surf; and welcomed by an intelligent and courteous German gentleman, who showed us all that was to be seen; and what we saw was satisfactory enough. The estate was paying, though this was only its third year. An average number of 77 convicts had already

[1] Quoted from Codazzi, by Messrs. Wall and Sawkins, in an Appendix on Asphalt Deposits, an excellent monograph which first pointed out, as far as I am aware, the fact that asphalt, at least at the surface, is found almost exclusively in the warmer parts of the globe.

cleared 195 acres, of which 182 were under cultivation. Part of this had just been reclaimed from pestilential swamp: a permanent benefit to the health of the island. In spite of the exceptional drought of the year before, and the subsequent plague of caterpillars, 83,000 pounds of rice had been grown; and the success of the rice crop, it must be remembered, will become more and more important to the island, as the increase of Coolie labourers increases the demand for the grain. More than half the plantains put in (22,000) were growing, and other vegetables in abundance. But, above all, there were more than 7,000 young coco-palms doing well, and promising a perpetual source of wealth for the future. For as the trees grow, and the crops raised between them diminish, the coco-palms will require little or no care, but yield fruit the whole year round without further expense; and the establishment can then be removed elsewhere, to reclaim a fresh sheet of land.

Altogether, the place was a satisfactory specimen of what can be effected in a tropical country by a Government which will govern. Since then, another source of profitable employment for West Indian convicts has been suggested to me. Bamboo, it is now found, will supply an admirable material for paper; and I have been assured by paper-makers that those who will plant the West Indian wet lands with bamboo for their use, may realize enormous profits.

We scrambled back into the boat—had, of course, a heap of fruit, bananas, oranges, pine-apples, tossed in after us—and ran back again in the steamer to the famous La Brea.

As we neared the shore, we perceived that the beach was black with pitch; and the breeze being off the land, the asphalt smell (not unpleasant) came off to welcome us. We rowed in, and saw in front of a little row of wooden houses a tall mulatto, in blue policeman's dress, gesticulating and shouting to us. He was the ward-policeman, and I found him (as I did all the coloured police) able and courteous, shrewd and trusty. These police are excellent specimens of what can be made of the Negro, or half-negro, if he be but first drilled, and then given a responsibility which calls out his self-respect. He was warning our crew not to run aground on one or other of the pitch reefs, which here take the place of rocks. A large one, a hundred yards off on the left, has been almost all dug away, and carried to New York or to Paris to make asphalt pavement.

The boat was run ashore, under his directions, on a spit of sand between the pitch; and when she ceased bumping up and down in the muddy surf, we scrambled out into a world exactly the hue of its inhabitants—of every shade, from jet-black to copper-brown. The pebbles on the shore were pitch. A tide-pool close by was enclosed in pitch: a four-eyes was swimming about in it, staring up at us; and when we

hunted him, tried to escape, not by diving, but by jumping on shore on the pitch, and scrambling off between our legs. While the policeman, after profoundest courtesies, was gone to get a mule-cart to take us up to the lake, and planks to bridge its water-channels, we took a look round at this oddest of corners of the earth.

In front of us was the unit of civilization—the police-station, wooden, on wooden stilts (as all well-built houses are here), to ensure a draught of air beneath them. We were, of course, asked to come in and sit down, but preferred looking about, under our umbrellas; for the heat was intense. The soil is half pitch, half brown earth, among which the pitch sweals in and out, as tallow sweals from a candle. It is always in slow motion under the heat of the tropic sun: and no wonder if some of the cottages have sunk right and left in such a treacherous foundation. A stone or brick house could not stand here: but wood and palm-thatch are both light and tough enough to be safe, let the ground give way as it will.

The soil, however, is very rich. The pitch certainly does not injure vegetation, though plants will not grow actually in it. The first plants which caught our eyes were pine-apples; for which La Brea is famous. The heat of the soil, as well as of the air, brings them to special perfection. They grow about anywhere, unprotected by hedge or fence; for the

Negros here seem honest enough, at least towards each other. And at the corner of the house was a bush worth looking at, for we had heard of it for many a year. It bore prickly, heart-shaped pods an inch long, filled with seeds coated with a red waxy pulp.

This was a famous plant—Bixa Orellana, Roucou; and that pulp was the well-known Arnotta dye of commerce. In England and Holland, it is used merely, I believe, to colour cheeses; but in the Spanish Main, to colour human beings. The Indian of the Orinoco prefers paint to clothes; and when he has "roucoued" himself from head to foot, considers himself in full dress, whether for war or dancing. Doubtless he knows his own business best from long experience. Indeed, as we stood broiling on the shore, we began somewhat to regret that European manners and customs prevented our adopting the Guaraon and Arawak fashion.

The mule-cart arrived; the lady of the party was put into it on a chair, and slowly bumped and rattled past the corner of Dundonald Street—so named after the old sea-hero, who was, in his lifetime, full of projects for utilizing this same pitch—and up a pitch road, with a pitch gutter on each side.

The pitch in the road has been, most of it, laid down by hand, and is slowly working down the slight incline, leaving pools and ruts full of water, often invisible, because covered with a film of brown pitch-dust, and so letting in the unwary

walker over his shoes. The pitch in the gutter-bank is in its native place, and as it spues slowly out of the soil into the ditch in odd wreaths and lumps, we could watch, in little, the process which has produced the whole deposit—probably the whole lake itself.

A bullock-cart, laden with pitch, came jolting down past us; and we observed that the lumps, when the fracture is fresh, have all a drawn-out look; that the very air-bubbles in them, which are often very numerous, are all drawn out likewise, long and oval, like the air-bubbles in some ductile lavas.

On our left, as we went on, the bush was low, all of yellow Cassia and white Hibiscus, and tangled with lovely convolvulus-like creepers, Ipomœa and Echites, with white, purple, or yellow flowers. On the right were Negro huts and gardens, fewer and fewer as we went on —all rich with fruit-trees, especially with oranges, hung with fruit of every hue; and beneath them, of course, the pine-apples of La Brea. Everywhere along the road grew, seemingly wild here, that pretty low tree, the Cashew, with rounded yellow-

Cashew Nut.

veined leaves and little green flowers, followed by a quaint pink and red-striped pear, from which hangs, at the larger and lower end, a kidney-shaped bean, which bold folk eat when roasted: but woe to those who try it when raw; for the acrid oil blisters the lips, and even while the beans are roasting the fumes of the oil will blister the cook's face if she holds it too near the fire.

As we went onward up the gentle slope (the rise is one hundred and thirty-eight feet in rather more than a mile), the ground became more and more full of pitch, and the vegetation poorer and more rushy, till it resembled, on the whole, that of an English fen. An Ipomœa or two, and a scarlet-flowered dwarf Heliconia, kept up the tropic type, as does a stiff brittle fern about two feet high.[1] We picked the weeds, which looked like English mint or basil, and found that most of them had three longitudinal nerves in each leaf, and were really Melastomas, though dwarfed into a far meaner habit than that of the noble forms we saw at Chaguanas, and again on the other side of the lake. On the right, too, in a hollow, was a whole wood of Groo-groo palms, grey stemmed, grey leaved; and here and there a patch of white or black roseau rose gracefully eight or ten feet high among the reeds.

The plateau of pitch now widened out, and the whole

[1] Blechnum serrulatum.

ground looked like an asphalt pavement, half overgrown with marsh-loving weeds, whose roots feed in the sloppy water which overlies the pitch. But, as yet, there was no sign of the lake. The incline, though gentle, shuts off the view of what is beyond. This last lip of the lake has surely overflowed, and is overflowing still, though very slowly. Its furrows all curve downward; and it is, in fact, as one of our party said, "a black glacier." The pitch, expanding under the burning sun of day, must needs expand most towards the line of least resistance, that is, downhill; and when it contracts again under the coolness of night, it contracts, surely from the same cause, more downhill than it does uphill; and so each particle never returns to the spot whence it started, but rather drags the particles above it downward toward itself. At least, so it seemed to us. Thus may be explained the common mistake which is noticed by Messrs. Wall and Sawkins[1] in their admirable description of the lake.

"All previous descriptions refer the bituminous matter scattered over the La Brea district, and especially that between the village and the lake, to streams which have issued at some former epoch from the lake, and extended into the sea. This supposition is totally incorrect, as solidification would have probably ensued before it had proceeded

1 "Geological Survey of Trinidad;" Appendix G, on Asphaltic Deposits.

one-tenth of the distance; and such of the asphalt as has undoubtedly escaped from the lake has not advanced more than a few yards, and always presents the curved surfaces already described, and never appears as an extended sheet."

Agreeing with this statement as a whole, I nevertheless cannot but think it probable that a great deal of the asphalt, whether it be in large masses or in scattered veins, may be moving very slowly downhill, from the lake to the sea, by the process of expansion by day, and contraction by night; and may be likened to a caterpillar, or rather caterpillars innumerable, progressing by expanding and contracting their rings, having strength enough to crawl downhill, but not strength enough to back uphill again.

At last we surmounted the last rise, and before us lay the famous lake—not at the bottom of a depression, as we expected, but at the top of a rise, whence the ground slopes away from it on two sides, and rises from it very slightly on the two others. The black pool glared and glittered in the sun. A group of islands, some twenty yards wide, were scattered about the middle of it. Beyond it rose a noble forest of Moriche fan-palms;[1] and to the right of them high wood with giant Mombins and undergrowth of Cocorite—a paradise on the other side of the Stygian pool.

[1] Mauritia flexuosa.

We walked, with some misgivings, on to the asphalt, and found it perfectly hard. In a few yards we were stopped by a channel of clear water, with tiny fish and water-beetles in ti; and, looking round, saw that the whole lake was intersected with channels, so unlike anything which can be seen elsewhere, that it is not easy to describe them.

Conceive a crowd of mushrooms, of all shapes, from ten to fifty feet across, close together side by side, their tops being kept at exactly the same level, their rounded rims squeezed tight against each other; then conceive water poured on them so as to fill the parting seams, and in the wet season, during which we visited it, to overflow the tops somewhat. Thus would each mushroom represent, tolerably well, one of the innumerable flat asphalt bosses, which seem to have sprung up each from a separate centre, while the parting seams would be of much the same shape as those in the asphalt, broad and shallow atop, and rolling downward in a smooth curve, till they are at bottom mere cracks, from two to ten feet deep. Whether these cracks actually close up below, and the two contiguous masses of pitch become one, cannot be seen. As far as the eye goes down, they are two, though pressed close to each other. Messrs. Wall and Sawkins explain the odd fact clearly and simply. The oil, they say, which the asphalt contains when it rises first, evaporates in the sun, of course most on the outside of the heap, leaving a tough coat of

asphalt, which has, generally, no power to unite with the corresponding coat of the next mass. Meanwhile, Mr. Manross, an American gentleman, who has written a very clever and interesting account of the lake,[1] seems to have been so far deceived by the curved and squeezed edges of these masses, that he attributes to each of them a revolving motion, and supposes that the material is continually passing from the centre to the edges, when it "rolls under," and rises again in the middle. Certainly the strange stuff looks, at the first glance, as if it were behaving in this way; and certainly, also, his theory would explain the appearance of sticks and logs in the pitch. But Messrs. Wall and Sawkins say that they observed no such motion; nor did we: and I agree with them, that it is not very obvious to what force, or what influence, it could be attributable. We must, therefore, seek for some other way of accounting for the sticks—which utterly puzzled us, and which Mr. Manross well describes as "numerous pieces of wood which, being involved in the pitch, are constantly coming to the surface. They are often several feet in length, and five or six inches in diameter. On reaching the surface they generally assume an upright position, one end being detained in the pitch, while the other is elevated by the lifting of the middle. They may be seen at frequent intervals over the lake, standing up to the height of two or even three

[1] "American Journal of Science," Sept. 1855.

feet. They look like stumps of trees protruding through the pitch; but their parvenu character is curiously betrayed by a ragged cap of pitch which invariably covers the top, and hangs down like hounds' ears on either side."

Whence do they come? Have they been blown on to the lake, or left behind by man? or are they fossil trees, integral parts of the vegetable stratum below which is continually rolling upward? or are they of both kinds? I do not know. Only this is certain, as Messrs. Wall and Sawkins have pointed out, that not only "the purer varieties of asphalt, such as approach or are identical with asphalt glance, have been observed" (though not, I think, in the lake itself) "in isolated masses, where there was little doubt of their proceeding from ligneous substances of larger dimensions, such as roots and pieces of trunks and branches;" but moreover, that "it is also necessary to admit a species of conversion by contact; since pieces of wood included accidentally in the asphalt, for example, by dropping from overhanging vegetation, are often found partially transformed into the material." This is a statement which we verified again and again; as we did the one which follows, namely, that the hollow bubbles which abound on the surface of the pitch "generally contain traces of the lighter portions of vegetation," and "are manifestly derived from leaves, &c., which are blown about the lake by the wind, and are covered with asphalt, and as they

The Pitch Lake.

become asphalt themselves, give off gases, which form bubbles round them."

But how is it that those logs stand up out of the asphalt, with asphalt caps and hounds' ears (as Mr. Manross well phrases it) on the tops of them?

We pushed on across the lake, over the planks which the Negros laid down from island to island. Some, meanwhile, preferred a steeple-chase with water-jumps, after the fashion of the midshipmen on a certain second visit to the lake. How the Negros grinned delight and surprise at the vagaries of English lads—a species of animal altogether new to them. And how they grinned still more when certain staid and portly dignitaries caught the infection, and proved, by more than one good leap, that they too had been English school-boys—alas! long, long ago.

So, whether by bridging, leaping, or wading, we arrived at last at the little islands, and found them covered with a thick low scrub; deep sedge, and among them Pinguins, like huge pine-apples without the apple; grey wild Pines—parasites on Matapalos, which of course have established themselves, like robbers and vagrants as they are, everywhere; a true Holly, with box-like leaves; and a rare Cocoa-plum,[1] very like the holly in habit, which seems to be all but confined to these little patches of red earth, afloat on the pitch. Out of

[1] Chrysobalanus Pellocarpus.

the scrub, when we were there, flew off two or three night-jars, very like our English species, save that they had white in the wings; and on the second visit, one of the midshipmen, true to the English boy's birds'-nesting instinct, found one of their eggs, white-spotted, in a grass nest.

Passing these little islands, which are said (I know not how truly) to change their places and number, we came to the very fountains of Styx, to that part of the lake where the asphalt is still oozing up.

As the wind set toward us, we soon became aware of an evil smell—petroleum and sulphuretted hydrogen at once—which gave some of us a headache. The pitch here is yellow and white with sulphur foam; so are the water-channels; and out of both water and pitch innumerable bubbles of gas arise, loathsome to the smell. We became aware also that the pitch was soft under our feet. We left the impression of our boots; and if we had stood still awhile, we should soon have been ankle-deep. No doubt there are spots where, if a man stayed long enough, he would be slowly and horribly engulfed. "But," as Mr. Manross says truly, "in no place is it possible to form those bowl-like depressions round the observer described by former travellers." What we did see is, that the fresh pitch oozes out at the lines of least resistance, namely, in the channels between the older and more

hardened masses, usually at the upper ends of them; so that one may stand on pitch comparatively hard, and put one's hand into pitch quite liquid, which is flowing softly out, like some ugly fungoid growth, such as may be seen in old wine-cellars, into the water. One such pitch-fungus had grown several yards in length in the three weeks between our first and second visit; and on another, some of our party performed exactly the same feat as Mr. Manross——

"In one of the star-shaped pools of water, some five feet deep, a column of pitch had been forced perpendicularly up from the bottom. On reaching the surface of the water it had formed a sort of centre table, about four feet in diameter, but without touching the sides of the pool. The stem was about a foot in diameter. I leaped out on this table, and found that it not only sustained my weight, but that the elasticity of the stem enabled me to rock it from side to side. Pieces torn from the edges of this table sank readily, showing that it had been raised by pressure, and not by its buoyancy."

True, though strange: but stranger still did it seem to us, when we did at last what the Negros asked us, and dipped our hands into the liquid pitch, to find that it did not soil the fingers. The old proverb, that one cannot touch pitch without being defiled, happily does not stand true here, or the place would be intolerably loathsome. It can be scraped up,

moulded into any shape you will; wound in a string (as was done by one of the midshipmen) round a stick, and carried off: but nothing is left on the hand save clean grey mud and water. It may be kneaded for an hour before the mud be sufficiently driven out of it to make it sticky. This very abundance of earthy matter it is which, while it keeps the pitch from soiling, makes it far less valuable than it would be were it pure.

It is easy to understand whence this earthy matter (twenty or thirty per cent.) comes. Throughout the neighbourhood the ground is full, to the depth of hundreds of feet, of coaly and asphaltic matter. Layers of sandstone or of shale containing this decayed vegetable, alternate with layers which contain none. And if, as seems probable, the coaly matter is continually changing into asphalt and oil, and then working its way upward through every crack and pore, to escape from the enormous pressure of the superincumbent soil, it must needs carry up with it innumerable particles of the soils through which it passes.

In five minutes we had seen, handled, and smelt enough to satisfy us with this very odd and very nasty vagary of tropic nature; and as we did not wish to become faint and ill, between the sulphuretted hydrogen and the blaze of the sun reflected off the hot black pitch, we hurried on over the water-furrows, and through the sedge-beds to the further

shore—to find ourselves in a single step out of an Inferno into a Paradiso.

We looked back at the foul place, and agreed that it is well for the human mind that the Pitch Lake was still unknown when Dante wrote that hideous poem of his—the opprobrium (as I hold) of the Middle Age. For if such were the dreams of its noblest and purest genius, what must have been the dreams of the ignoble and impure multitude? But had he seen this lake, how easy, how tempting too, it would have been to him to embody in imagery the surmise of a certain "Father," and heighten the torments of the lost beings, sinking slowly into that black Bolge beneath the baking rays of the tropic sun, by the sight of the saved, walking where we walked, beneath cool fragrant shade, among the pillars of a temple to which the Parthenon is mean and small.

Sixty feet and more aloft, the short smooth columns of the Moriches[1] towered around us, till, as we looked through the "pillared shade," the eye was lost in the green abysses of the forest. Overhead, their great fan-leaves form a groined roof, compared with which that of St. Mary Redcliff, or even of King's College, is as clumsy as all man's works are beside the works of God; and beyond the Moriche wood, ostrich plumes packed close round madder-brown stems, formed a wall to our temple, which bore such tracery, carving, painting, as would have

[1] Mauritia flexuosa.

stricken dumb with awe and delight him who ornamented the Loggie of the Vatican. True, all is "still-life" here: no human forms, hardly even that of a bird, is mixed with the vegetable arabesques. A higher state of civilization, ages after we are dead, may introduce them, and complete the scene by peopling it with a race worthy of it. But the Creator, at least, has done His part toward producing perfect beauty, all the more beautiful from its contrast with the ugliness outside. For the want of human beings fit for all that beauty, man is alone to blame; and when we saw approach us, as the only priest of such a temple, a wild brown man, who feeds his hogs on Moriche fruit and Mombin plums, and whose only object was to sell us an ant-eater's skin, we thought to ourselves—knowing the sad history of the West Indies—what might this place have become, during the three hundred and fifty years which have elapsed since Columbus first sailed round it, had men—calling themselves Christian, calling themselves civilized—possessed any tincture of real Christianity, of real civilization? What a race, of mingled Spaniard and Indian, might have grown up throughout the West Indies. What a life, what a society, what an art, what a science it might have developed ere now, equalling, even surpassing, that of Ionia, Athens, and Sicily, till the famed isles and coasts of Greece should have been almost forgotten in the new fame of the isles and coasts of the Carribæan Sea.

What might not have happened, had men but tried to copy their Father in heaven? What has happened is but too well known, since, in July 1498, Columbus, coming hither, fancied (and not so wrongly) that he had come to the "base of the Earthly Paradise."

What might not have been made, with something of justice and mercy, common sense and humanity, of these gentle Arawaks and Guaraons. What was made of them, almost ere Columbus was dead, may be judged from this one story, taken from Las Casas.[1]

"There was a certain man named Juan Bono, who was employed by the members of the Audiencia of St. Domingo to go and obtain Indians. He and his men, to the number of fifty or sixty, landed on the Island of Trinidad. Now the Indians of Trinidad were a mild, loving, credulous race, the enemies of the Caribs who ate human flesh. On Juan Bono's landing, the Indians, armed with bows and arrows, went to meet the Spaniards, and to ask them who they were, and what they wanted. Juan Bono replied, that his crew were good and peaceful people, who had come to live with the Indians; upon which, as the commencement of good fellowship, the natives offered to build houses for the Spaniards. The Spanish captain expressed a wish to have one large house built. The accommodating Indians set about building it. It

[1] See Mr. Helps' "Spanish Conquest in America," vol. ii. p. 10.

was to be in the form of a bell, and to be large enough for a hundred persons to live in. On any great occasion it would hold many more. Every day, while this house was being built, the Spaniards were fed with fish, bread, and fruit by their good-natured hosts. Juan Bono was very anxious to see the roof on, and the Indians continued to work at the building with alacrity. At last it was completed, being two storeys high, and so constructed that those within could not see those without. Upon a certain day, Juan Bono collected the Indians together—men, women, and children—in the building, 'to see,' as he told them, 'what was to be done.'

"Whether they thought they were coming to some festival, or that they were to do something more for the great house, does not appear. However, there they all were, four hundred of them, looking with much delight at their own handiwork. Meanwhile, Juan Bono brought his men round the building, with drawn swords in their hands; then, having thoroughly entrapped his Indian friends, he entered with a party of armed men, and bade the Indians keep still, or he would kill them. They did not listen to him, but rushed to the door. A horrible massacre ensued. Some of the Indians forced their way out; but many of them, stupified at what they saw, and losing heart, were captured and bound. A hundred, however, escaped, and snatching up their arms, assembled in one of their own houses, and prepared to defend themselves.

Juan Bono summoned them to surrender: they would not hear of it; and then, as Las Casas says, 'he resolved to pay them completely for the hospitality and kind treatment he had received,' and so, setting fire to the house, the whole hundred men, together with some women and children, were burnt alive. The Spanish captain and his men retired to the ships with their captives; and his vessel happening to touch at Porto Rico, when the Jeronimite Fathers were there, gave occasion to Las Casas to complain of this proceeding to the Fathers, who, however, did nothing in the way of remedy or punishment. The reader will be surprised to hear the Clerigo's authority for this deplorable narrative. It is Juan Bono himself. 'From his own mouth I heard that which I write.' Juan Bono acknowledged that never in his life had he met with the kindness of father or mother but in the island of Trinidad. 'Well, then, man of perdition, why did you reward them with such ungrateful wickedness and cruelty?' 'On my faith, padre, because they (he meant the Auditors) gave me for destruction (he meant instruction) to take them in peace, if I could not by war.'"

Such was the fate of the poor gentle folk who for unknown ages had swung their hammocks to the stems of these Moriches, spinning the skin of the young leaves into twine, and making sago from the pith, and thin wine from the sap and fruit, while they warned their children not to touch

the nests of the humming-birds, which even till lately swarmed around the lake. For—so the Indian story ran—once on a time a tribe of Chaymas built their palm-leaf ajoupas upon the very spot where the lake now lies, and lived a merry life. The sea swarmed with shell-fish and turtle, and the land with pine-apples; the springs were haunted by countless flocks of flamingoes and horned screamers, pajuis and blue ramiers; and, above all, by humming-birds. But the foolish Chaymas were blind to the mystery and the beauty of the humming-birds, and would not understand how they were no other than the souls of dead Indians, translated into living jewels; and so they killed them in wantonness, and angered "The Good Spirit." But one morning, when the Guaraons came by, the Chayma village had sunk deep into the earth, and in its place had risen this lake of pitch. So runs the tale, told some forty years since to M. Joseph, author of a clever little history of Trinidad, by an old half-caste Indian, Señor Trinidada by name, who was said then to be nigh one hundred years of age.

Surely the people among whom such a myth could spring up, were worthy of a nobler fate. Surely there were in them elements of "sweetness and light," which might have been cultivated to some fine fruit, had there been anything like sweetness and light in their first conquerors—the offscourings

not of Spain and Portugal only, but of Germany, Italy, and, indeed, almost every country in Europe. The present Spanish landowners of Trinidad, be it remembered always, do not derive from those old ruffians, but from noble and ancient families, who settled in the island during the seventeenth century, bringing with them a Spanish grace, Spanish simplicity, and Spanish hospitality, which their descendants have certainly not lost. Were it my habit to "put people into books," I would gladly tell in these pages of charming days spent in the company of Spanish ladies and gentlemen. But I shall only hint here at the special affection and respect with which they—and, indeed, the French Creoles likewise—are regarded by Negro and by Indian.

For there are a few Indians remaining in the northern mountains, and specially at Arima—simple hamlet-folk, whom you can distinguish, at a glance, from mulattoes or quadroons, by the tawny complexion, and by a shape of eye, and length between the eye and the mouth, difficult to draw, impossible to describe, but discerned instantly by anyone accustomed to observe human features. Many of them, doubtless, have some touch of Negro blood, and are the offspring of "Cimarons"—"Maroons," as they are still called in Jamaica. These Cimarons were Negros who, even in the latter half of the sixteenth century (as may be read in the tragical tale of John Oxenham, given in Hakluyt's Voyages), had begun to flee

from their cruel masters into the forests, both in the Islands and in the Main. There they took to themselves Indian wives, who preferred them, it is said, to men of their own race, and lived a jolly hunter's life, slaying with tortures every Spaniard who fell into their hands. Such, doubtless, haunted the northern Cerros of Tocuche, Aripo, and Oropuche, and left some trace of themselves among the Guaraons. Spanish blood, too, runs notoriously in the veins of some of the Indians of the island; and the pure race here is all but vanished. But out of these three elements has arisen a race of cacao-growing mountaineers as simple and gentle, as loyal and peaceable, as any in her Majesty's dominions. Dignified, courteous, hospitable, according to their little means, they salute the white Señor without defiance and without servility, and are delighted if he will sit in their clay and palm ajoupas, and eat oranges and Malacca apples[1] from their own trees, on their own freehold land.

They preserve, too, the old Guaraon arts of weaving baskets and other utensils, pretty enough, from the strips of the Aruma leaves. From them the Negro, who will not, or cannot, equal them in handicraft, buys the pack in which wares are carried on the back, and the curious strainer in which the Cassava is deprived of its poisonous juice. So cleverly are the fibres twisted, that when the strainer is hung up, with a stone

[1] Jambosa Malaccensis.

weight at the lower end, the diameter of the strainer decreases as its length increases, and the juice is squeezed out through the pores to drip into a calabash, and, nowadays, to be thrown carefully away, lest children or goats should drink it. Of old, it was kept with care and dried down to a gum, and used to poison arrows, as it is still used, I believe, on the Orinoco; now, its poisonous properties are expelled by boiling it down into Cassaripe, which has a singular power of preserving meat, and is the foundation of the "pepperpot" of the colonists.

And this is all that remains of the once beautiful, deft, and happy Indians of Trinidad, unless, indeed, some of them, warned by the fate of the Indians of San Josef and the Northern Mountains, fled from such tyrants as Juan Bono and Berreo across the Gulf of Paria, and, rejoining their kinsmen on the mainland, gladly forgot the sight of that Cross which was to them the emblem, not of salvation, but of destruction.

For once a year till of late—I know not whether the thing may be seen still—a strange phantom used to appear at San Fernando, twenty miles to the north. Canoes of Indians came mysteriously across the Gulf of Paria from the vast swamps of the Orinoco; and the naked folk landed, and went up through the town, after the Naparima ladies (so runs the tale) had sent down to the shore garments for the women,

which were worn only through the streets, and laid by again as soon as they entered the forest. Silent, modest, dejected, the gentle savages used to vanish into the woods by paths known to their kinsfolk centuries ago—paths which run, wherever possible, along the vantage-ground of the topmost chines and ridges of the hills. The smoke of their fires rose out of lonely glens, as they collected the fruit of trees known only to themselves. In a few weeks their wild harvest was over; they came back through San Fernando; made, almost in silence, their little purchases in the town, and paddled away across the gulf towards the unknown wildernesses from whence they came.

And now—as if sent to drive away sad thoughts and vain regrets—before our feet lay a jest of Nature's, almost as absurd as a "four-eyed fish," or "calling-crab." A rough stick, of the size of your little finger, lay on the pitch. We watched it a moment, and saw that it was crawling—that it was a huge Caddis, like those in English ponds and streams, though of a very different family. They are the larvæ of Phryganeas—this of a true moth.[1] The male of this moth will come out, as a moth should, and fly about on four handsome wings. The female will never develop her wings, but remain to her life's end a crawling grub, like the female of our own Vapourer moth, and that of our English Glow-worm. But

[1] Oiketicus.

more, she will never (at least, in some species of this family) leave her silk and bark case, but live and die, an anchoritess in narrow cell, leaving behind her more than one puzzle for physiologists. The case is fitted close to the body of the caterpillar, save at the mouth, where it hangs loose in two ragged silken curtains. We all looked at the creature, and it looked at us, with its last two or three joints and its head thrust out of its house. Suddenly, disgusted at our importunity, it laid hold of its curtains with two hands, right and left, like a human being, folded them modestly over its head, held them tight together, and so retired to bed, amid the inextinguishable laughter of the whole party.

The noble Moriche palm delights in wet, at least in Trinidad and on the lower Orinoco: but Schomburgk describes forests of them—if, indeed, it be the same species—as growing in the mountains of Guiana up to an altitude of four thousand feet. The soil in which they grow here is half pitch pavement, half loose brown earth, and over both, shallow pools of water, which will become much deeper in the wet season; and all about float or lie their pretty fruit, the size of an apple, and scaled like a fir-cone. They are last year's, empty and decayed. The ripe fruit contains first a rich pulpy nut, and at last a hard cone, something like that of the vegetable ivory palm,[1] which grows in the Mainland, but not

[1] Phytelephas macrocarpa.

here. Delicious they are, and precious, to monkeys and parrots, as well as to the Orinooko Indians, among whom the Tamanacs, according to Humboldt, say, that when a man and woman survived that great deluge, which the Mexicans call the age of water, they cast behind them, over their heads, the fruits of the Moriche palm, as Deucalion and Pyrrha cast stones, and saw the seeds in them produce men and women, who repeopled the earth. No wonder, indeed, that certain tribes look on this tree as sacred, or that the missionaries should have named it the tree of life.

"In the season of inundations these clumps of Mauritia, with their leaves in the form of a fan, have the appearance of a forest rising from the bosom of the waters. The navigator in proceeding along the channels of the delta of the Orinooko at night, sees with surprise the summit of the palm-trees illumined by large fires. These are the habitations of the Guaraons (Tivitivas and Waraweties of Raleigh), which are suspended from the trunks of the trees. These tribes hang up mats in the air, which they fill with earth, and kindle on a layer of moist clay the fire necessary for their household wants. They have owed their liberty and their political independence for ages to the quaking and swampy soil, which they pass over in the time of drought, and on which they alone know how to walk in security to their solitude in the delta of the Orinooko, to their abode on the trees, where

religious enthusiasm will probably never lead any American Stylites. . . . . The Mauritia palm-tree, the *tree of life* of the missionaries, not only affords the Guaraons a safe dwelling during the risings of the Orinooko, but its shelly fruit, its farinaceous pith, its juice, abounding in saccharine matter, and the fibres of its petioles, furnish them with food, wine, and thread proper for making cords and weaving hammocks. These customs of the Indians of the delta of the Orinooko were found formerly in the Gulf of Darien (Uraba), and in the greater part of the inundated lands between the Guerapiche and the mouths of the Amazon. It is curious to observe in the lowest degree of human civilization the existence of a whole tribe depending on one single species of palm-tree, similar to those insects which feed on one and the same flower, or on one and the same part of a plant."[1]

In a hundred yards more we were on dry ground, and the vegetation changed at once. The Mauritias stopped short at the edge of the swamp; and around us towered the smooth stems of giant Mombins, which the English West Indians call hog-plums, according to the unfortunate habit of the early settlers of discarding the sonorous and graceful Indian and Spanish names of plants, and replacing them by names English, or corruptions of the original, always ugly, and often

1 Humboldt, "Personal Narrative," vol. v. pp. 728-29, of Helen Maria Williams's Translation.

silly and vulgar. So the English call yon noble tree a hog-plum ; the botanist (who must, of course, use his world-wide Latin designation), Spondias lutea ; I shall, with the reader's leave, call it a Mombin, by which name it is, happily, known here, as it was in the French West Indies in the days of good Père Labat. Under the Mombins the undergrowth is, for the most part, huge fans of Cocorite palm, thirty or forty feet high, their short rugged trunks, as usual, loaded with creepers, orchids, birds'-nests, and huge round black lumps, which are the nests of ants ; all lodged among the butts of old leaves and the spathes of old flowers. Here, as at Chaguanas, grand Cerimans and Seguines scrambled twenty feet up the Cocorite trunks, delighting us by the luscious life in the fat stem and fat leaves, and the brilliant, yet tender green, which literally shone in the darkness of the Cocorite bower ; and all, it may be, the growth of the last six months for, as was plain from the charred stems of many Cocorites and Moriches, the fire had swept through the wood last summer, destroying all that would burn. And at the foot of the Cocorites, weltering up among and over their roots, was pitch again ; and here and there along the side of the path were pitch springs, round bosses a yard or two across and a foot or two high, each with a crater atop a few inches across, filled either with water, or with liquid and oozing pitch ; and yet not interfering, as far as could

be seen, with the health of the vegetation which springs out of it.

We followed the trace which led downhill, to the shore of the peninsula furthest from the village. As we proceeded we entered forest still unburnt, and a tangle of beauty such as we saw at Chaguanas. There rose, once more, the tall cane-like Manacque palms, which we christened the forest nymphs. The path was lined, as there, with the great leaves of the Melastomas, throwing russet and golden light down from their undersides. Here, as there, Mimosa leaflets, as fine as fern or sea-weed, shiver in the breeze. A species of Balisier, which we did not see there, carried crimson and black parrot beaks with blue seed-vessels; a Canne-de-rivière,[1] with a stem eight feet high, wreathed round with pale green leaves in spiral twists, unfolded hooded flowers of thinnest transparent white wax, with each a blush of pink inside. Bunches of bright yellow Cassia blossoms dangled close to our heads; white Ipomœas scrambled over them again; and broad-leaved sedges, five feet high, carrying on bright brown flower-heads, like those of our Wood-rush, blue, black, and white shot for seeds.[2] Overhead, sprawled and dangled the common Vine-bamboo,[3] ugly and unsatisfactory in form, because it has not yet, seemingly, made up its mind whether it will become an arborescent or a climbing grass; and, mean-

[1] Costus. [2] Scleria latifolia. [3] Panicum divaricatum.

while, tries to stand upright on stems quite unable to support it, and tumbles helplessly into the neighbouring copsewood, taking every one's arm without asking leave. A few ages hence, its ablest descendants will probably have made their choice, if they have constitution enough to survive in the battle of life—which, from the commonness of the plant, they seem likely to have. And what their choice will be, there is little doubt. There are trees here of a truly noble nature, whose ancestors have conquered ages since; it may be by selfish and questionable means. But their descendants, secure in their own power, can afford to be generous, and allow a whole world of lesser plants to nestle in their branches, another world to fatten round their feet. There are humble and modest plants, too, here—and those some of the loveliest—which have long since cast away all ambition, and are content to crouch or perch anywhere, if only they may be allowed a chance ray of light, and a chance drop of water wherewith to perfect their flowers and seed. But, throughout the great republic of the forest, the motto of the majority is—as it is, and always has been, with human beings—"Every one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." Selfish competition, overreaching tyranny, the temper which fawns and clings as long as it is down, and when it has risen, kicks over the stool by which it climbed—these and the other "works of the flesh" are the works of the

average plant, as far as it can practise them. So by the time the Bamboo-vine makes up its mind, it will have discovered, by the experience of many generations, the value of the proverb, "Never do for yourself what you can get another to do for you," and will have developed into a true high climber, selfish and insolent, choking and strangling, like yonder beautiful green pest, of which beware; namely, a tangle of Razor-grass.[1] The brother, in old times, of that broad-leaved sedge which carries the shot-seeds, it has long since found it more profitable to lean on others than to stand on its own legs, and has developed itself accordingly. It has climbed up the shrubs some fifteen feet, and is now tumbling down again in masses of the purest deep green, which are always softly rounded, because each slender leaf is sabre-shaped, and always curves inward and downward into the mass, presenting to the paper thousands of minute saw-edges, hard enough and sharp enough to cut clothes, skin, and flesh to ribands, if it is brushed in the direction of the leaves. For shape and colour, few plants would look more lovely in a hothouse; but it would soon need to be confined in a den by itself, like a jaguar or an alligator.

Here, too, we saw a beautiful object, which was seen again more than once about the high woods; a large flower,[2] spreading its five flat orange-scarlet lobes round yellow bells.

[1] Scleria flagellum.

[2] Echites symphytocarpa (?).

It grows in little bunches, in the axils of pairs of fleshy leaves, on a climbing vine. When plucked, a milky sap exudes from it. It is a cousin of our periwinkles, and cousin, too, of the Thevetia, which we saw at St. Thomas', and of the yellow Allamandas which ornament hot-houses at home, as this, and others of its family, especially the yellow Odontadenia, surely ought to do. There are many species of the family about, and all beautiful.

We passed too, in the path, an object curious enough, if not beautiful. Up a smooth stem ran a little rib, seemingly of earth and dead wood, almost straight, and about half an inch across, leading to a great brown lump among the branches, as big as a bushel basket. We broke it open, and found it a covered gallery, swarming with life. Brown, ant-like creatures, white, maggot-like creatures, of several shapes and sizes, were hurrying up and down, as busy as human beings in Cheapside. They were Termites, "white ants"—of which of the many species I know not—and the lump above was their nest. But why they should find it wisest to perch their nest aloft is as difficult to guess, as to guess why they take the trouble to build this gallery up to it, instead of walking up the stem in the open air. It may be that they are afraid of birds. It may be, too, that they actually dislike the light. At all events, the majority of them—the workers and soldiers, I believe, without exception, are blind, and do

all their work by an intensely developed sense of touch—and it may be of smell and hearing also. Be that as it may, we should have seen them, had we had time to wait, repair the breach in their gallery, with as much discipline and division of labour as average human workers in a manufactory, before the business of food-getting was resumed.

We hurried on along the trace, which now sloped rapidly downhill. Suddenly, a loathsome smell defiled the air. Was there a gas-house in the wilderness? Or had the pales of Paradise been just smeared with bad coal-tar? Not exactly: but across the path crept, festering in the sun, a black runnel of petroleum and water; and twenty yards to our left stood, under a fast-crumbling trunk, what was a year or two ago a little engine-house. Now roof, beams, machinery, were all tumbled and tangled in hideous and somewhat dangerous ruin, over a shaft, in the midst of which a rusty pump-cylinder gurgled, and clicked, and bubbled, and spued, with black oil and nasty gas; a foul ulcer in Dame Nature's side, which happily was healing fast beneath the tropic rain and sun. The creepers were climbing over it, the earth crumbling into it, and in few years more the whole would be engulfed in forest, and the oil-spring, it is to be hoped, choked up with mud.

This is the remnant of one of the many rash speculations connected with the Pitch Lake. At a depth of some two

hundred and fifty feet "oil was struck," as the American saying is. But (so we were told) it would not rise in the boring, and had to be pumped up. It could not, therefore, compete in price with the Pennsylvanian oil, which, when tapped, springs out of the ground of itself, to a height sometimes of many feet, under the pressure of the superincumbent rocks, yielding enormous profits, and turning needy adventurers into millionaires, though full half of the oil is sometimes wasted for the want of means to secure it.

We passed the doleful spot with a double regret—for the nook of Paradise which had been defiled, and for the good money which had been wasted: but with a hearty hope, too, that, whatever natural beauty may be spoilt thereby, the wealth of these asphalt deposits may at last be utilized. Whether it be good that a few dozen men should "make their fortunes" thereby, depends on what use the said men make of the said "fortunes;" and certainly it will not be good for them if they believe, as too many do, that their dollars, and not their characters, constitute their fortunes. But it is good, and must be, that these treasures of heat and light should not remain for ever locked up and idle in the wilderness; and we wished all success to the enterprising American who had just completed a bargain with the Government for a large supply of asphalt, which he hoped by his chemical knowledge to turn to some profitable use.

Another turn brought us into a fresh nook of Paradise; and this time to one still undefiled. We hurried down a narrow grass path, the Cannes de Rivière and the Balisiers brushing our heads as we passed; while round us danced brilliant butterflies, bright orange, sulphur-yellow, black and crimson, black and lilac, and half a dozen hues more, till we stopped, surprised and delighted. For beneath us lay the sea, seen through a narrow gap of richest verdure.

On the left, low palms feathered over the path, and over the cliff. On the right—when shall we see it again?—rose a young "Bois flot,"[1] of which boys make their fishing floats, with long, straight, upright shoots, and huge crumpled, rounded leaves, pale rusty underneath—a noble rastrajo plant, already, in its six months' growth, some twenty feet high. Its broad pale sulphur flowers were yet unopened; but, instead, an ivy-leaved Ipomœa had climbed up it, and shrouded it from head to foot with hundreds of white convolvulus-flowers; while underneath it grew a tuft of that delicate silver-backed fern, which is admired so much in hothouses at home. Between it and the palms we saw the still, shining sea; muddy inshore, and a few hundred yards out changing suddenly to bright green; and the point of the cove, which seemed built up of bright red brick, fast crumbling into the sea, with all its palms and cactuses, lianes and

[1] Ochroma.

trees. Red stacks and skerries stood isolated and ready to fall at the end of the point, showing that the land has, even lately, extended far out to sea; and that Point Rouge, like Point Courbaril and Point Galba, so named one from some great Locust-tree, the other from some great Galba, must have once stood there as landmarks. Indeed all the points of the peninsula are but remnants of a far larger sheet of land, which has been slowly eaten up by the surges of the gulf; which has perhaps actually sunk bodily beneath them, even as the remnant, I suspect, is sinking now. We scrambled twenty feet down to the beach, and lay down, tired, under a low cliff, feathered with richest vegetation. The pebbles on which we sat were some of pitch, some of hard sandstone, but most of them of brick; pale, dark, yellow, lavender, spotted, clouded, and half-a-dozen more delicate hues; some coarse, some fine as Samian ware; the rocks themselves were composed of an almost glassy substance, strangely jumbled, even intercalated now and then with soft sand. This, we were told, is a bit of the porcellanite formation of Trinidad, curious to geologists, which reappears at several points in Erin, Trois, and Cedros, in the extreme south-western horn of the island.

How was it formed, and when? That it was formed by the action of fire, any child would agree who had ever seen a brick kiln. It is simply clay and sand baked, and often

almost vitrified into porcelain-jasper. The stratification is gone; the porcellanite has run together into irregular masses, or fallen into them by the burning away of strata beneath; and the cracks in it are often lined with bubbled slag.

But whence came the fire? We must be wary about calling in the Deus e machina of a volcano. There is no volcanic rock in the neighbourhood, nor anywhere in the island; and the porcellanite, says Mr. Wall, "is identically the same with the substances produced immediately above or below seams of coal, which have taken fire, and burnt for a length of time." There is lignite and other coaly matter enough in the rocks to have burnt like coal, if it had once been ignited; and the cause of ignition may be, as Mr. Wall suggests, the decomposition of pyrites, of which also there is enough around. That the heat did not come from below, as volcanic heat would have done, is proved by the fact that the lignite beds underneath the porcellanite are unburnt. We found asphalt under the porcellanite. We found even one bit of red porcellanite with unburnt asphalt included in it.

May not this strange formation of natural brick and China-ware be of immense age—humanly, not geologically, speaking? May it not be far older than the Pitch Lake above—older possibly, than the formation of any asphalt at all? And may not the asphalt mingled with it have been squeezed into it and round it, as it is being squeezed into and

through the unburnt strata at so many points in Guapo, La Brea, Oropuche, and San Fernando? At least, so it seemed to us, as we sat on the shore, waiting for the boat to take us round to La Brea, and drank in dreamily with our eyes the beauty of that strange lonely place. The only living things, save ourselves, which were visible were a few pelicans sleeping on a skerry, and a shoal of dolphins rolling silently in threes—husband, wife, and little child—as they fished their way along the tide mark between the yellow water and the green. The sky blazed overhead, the sea below; the red rocks and green forests blazed around; and we sat enjoying the genial silence, not of darkness, but of light, not of death, but of life, as the noble heat permeated every nerve, and made us feel young, and strong, and blithe once more.

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